JIU JITSU STYLE

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MAURICIO GOMES

MICHELLE NICOLINI

LIVING THE BJJ DREAM

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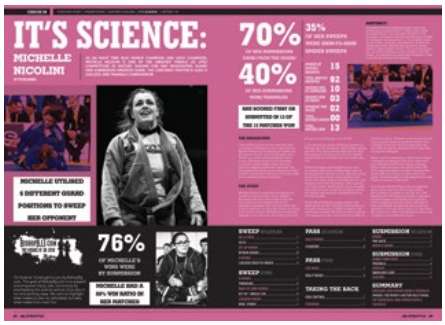

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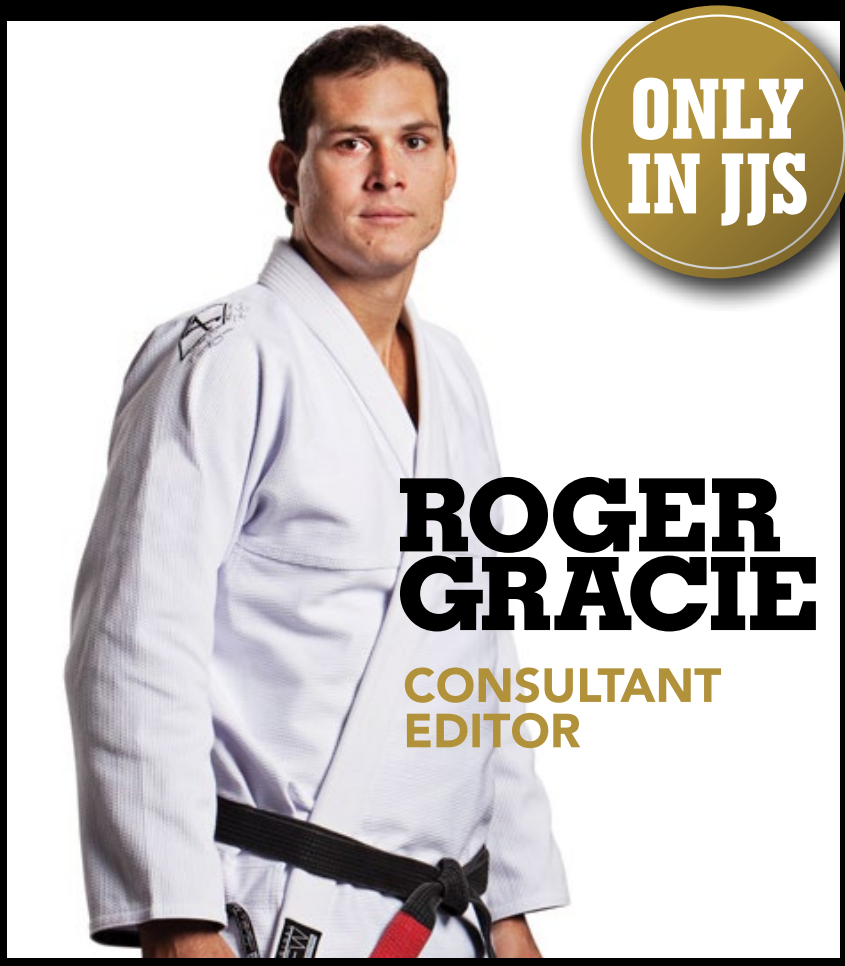

It's great to be able to have Rubens Charles "Cobrinha" as our last cover star of 2015. There are few people who have achieved more than Cobrinha in sport jiu jitsu and he's been competing at the top level for a long time, having won his first black belt world title back in 2006.

Our feature with Cobrinha delves into his mentality as a fighter and the psychological approach he takes towards making sure he can perform to the best of his ability. The psychology behind competition and being strong minded is something that I really appreciate as an individual, and I believe our readers can really learn a lot from Cobrinha's comments – so don't miss out!

We also have a very interesting interview with Eddie Cummings, a man who trains at my uncle Renzo's academy. Eddie has had a big year competing at nogi events like the Eddie Bravo Invitational, Polaris Pro and of course, the ADCC. We all know Eddie is renowned for his leglocks and submission oriented way of fighting, which I think its great. Jiu jitsu should always be about looking for the submission, and that is something that I have always tried to do myself when I compete.

"THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND COMPETITION AND BEING STRONG MINDED IS SOMETHING THAT I REALLY APPRECIATE AS AN INDIVIDUAL"

We also have a big review of Polaris Pro 2, which took place in Cardiff, Wales. Though I wasn't able to see the show myself, many people have told me that it was one of the most exciting nights of jiu jitsu they've seen. If, like me, you missed the event, make sure you check out our review and awesome 'behind the scenes' pictures.

Alongside our regular technique contributors, Nick Brooks and Braulio Estima, we have some awesome nogi sequences with Dillon Danis and self-defence with my father, Mauricio Gomes. Self-defence is an area of jiu jitsu that is often neglected, but the basics are something that we must all learn. Hopefully you like the self-defence stuff as a little change from our normal content!

On a personal note, I have been training really hard for a potential MMA fight at the end of the year and I'm feeling great. I've been working on my boxing and conditioning a lot, and I look forward to testing myself once again in the cage and developing as a fighter.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

THE GODFATHER BY SCRAMBLE

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14TH FEBRUARY 2016

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JIU JITSU CHAMPIONSHIP

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BLUE BELT (ADULT MALE) OPEN WEIGHT • PURPLE BELT (ADULT MALE) OPEN WEIGHT • BROWN BELT (ADULT MALE) OPEN WEIGHT
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THE BIG PICTURE

The calm before the storm. Pedro Bessa deep in mental preparation ahead of his Polaris Pro 2 match against Luca Anacoreta.

PICTURE: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

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CLASSIC MATCH:

BACKGROUND

Despite the visible decline of pure BJJ fighters in MMA during the mid to late '90s, the Gracie family had managed to cling on to their pre-eminent reputation. Back in Brazil, the Gracie last name had stopped being a mark of invincibility some time ago. Helio, George and Carlson, among others, had all lost vale tudo matches many years before. Yet outside of Brazil, Rorion had successfully marketed his family as not only unbeaten, but unbeatable. The time had come for somebody to lay that myth to rest once and for all.

That somebody was a Japanese pro-wrestler called Kazushi Sakuraba, whose grappling mainly came from catch wrestling. His impressive skills were highlighted by the early years of PRIDE FC, a promotion that once eclipsed the UFC. Sakuraba engaged in what were essentially grappling masterclasses in PRIDE 2 and PRIDE 3, demonstrating that BJJ did not have a monopoly on grappling skill (though it is worth noting that Roberto Pedreira claims Sakuraba had some BJJ training himself, from Sergio Penha). He continued his run of success through to PRIDE 8, the only real hiccup a hard-fought draw against Allan Goes.

To truly prove himself, he needed to face a Gracie. The fight everybody wanted to see, but which sadly never came to pass, was against Rickson. Sakuraba had to settle for Rickson's brothers and cousins instead. Royler was the first to take up the challenge. Before Roger, Royler was arguably the best Gracie exponent of competitive jiu jitsu, winning the Mundials gold medal at featherweight every year from 1996 to 1999. In the second round of their match at PRIDE 8, Sakuraba eventually managed to pass Royler's guard and secure his arm. Locking on a kimura, it looked as though Gracie's arm was about to break: the referee stopped the fight, not actually permitted under the special rules Royler insisted upon.

A chance for a more decisive win came in the 2000 PRIDE Grand Prix, where this time Royce stepped into the fray. Once again, the Gracie family demanded special rules were in place. After beating Nobuhiko Takada, Royce would face Sakuraba in the quarter-final: each round was to be fifteen minutes, but without any restriction on their number, resulting in a gruelling ninety minute battle. Though he had given a good account of himself, by the end Royce was in a great deal of pain:

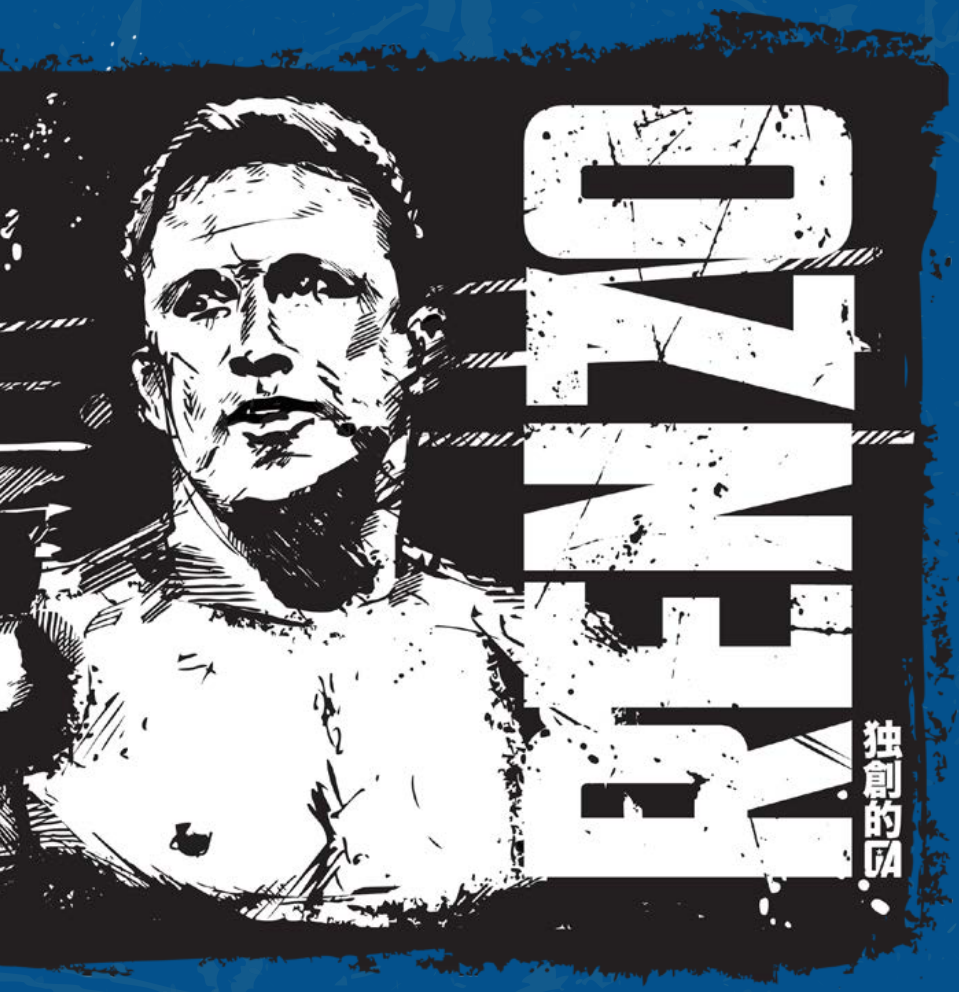
"I told my corner, 'I can't walk. If I get up, I'm not going to be able to move and he is going to knock me out. At the time I didn't know I had a broken foot, a partial tear of my tendon and a crack on my shin. Rorion said, 'Stop! You can't walk? There is no reason to confuse bravery with stupidity'."

Royce was larger than Royler, but he had no significant record in jiu jitsu competition. The next defender of jiu jitsu would be a grandson of Carlos Gracie. Like Royler, Renzo Gracie had a competitive pedigree, with two ADCC titles, but he was around the same size as Sakuraba. It was up to him to finally reclaim the Gracie family honour at PRIDE 10.

EVEN THOUGH RENZO WOULDN'T TAP, SAKURABA IS THE ONE AND ONLY MAN TO HAVE EVER SUBMITTED GRACIE IN AN MMA MATCH.

RENZO GRACIE SPENT OVER 40% OF THE MATCH FIGHTING FROM HIS GUARD

MATCH LENGTH: 9 MINS 43 SECS
LOCATION: SAITAMA, JAPAN
DATE: 27TH AUGUST 2000
EVENT: PRIDE FC 10
VENUE: SEIBU DOME
ATTENDANCE: 35,000



THE MATCH

The first round alternated between striking exchanges on the feet, then attempts to strike from open guard with Renzo on his back. Things continued in that vein in the second round, the only difference being a brief segment of closed guard. The excitement all happened as the clock was close to running out. Renzo managed to catch a leg as he fired forward from open guard, climbing up to get double underhooks on Sakuraba. The Japanese fighter locked on a kimura grip, dismissed by the commentator (a certain Eddie Bravo) as something he most likely got on training partners in the gym, but couldn't hope to pull off in a professional fight. The two men fell to turtle. As they stood back up this time, Sakuraba still had that figure-four. He swiftly spun through, ending with a tight kimura from side control. A few seconds later the referee rushed in, shouting "Tap tap tap!"

AFTERMATH

The commentators were initially uncertain what had happened, particularly as Renzo was calmly looking at his arm, bent at an unnatural angle. Renzo remembered on the *Legacy* documentary that:

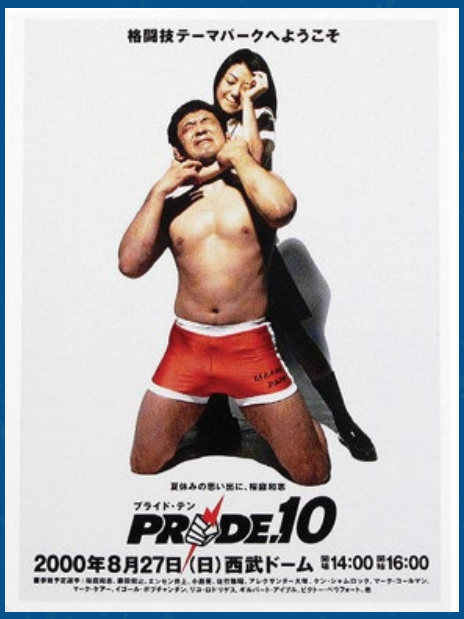
"*I had plenty of time to tap. I was just laughing and saying 'That will never happen!' I had my arm broke, my arm actually came out of the socket. It was an ugly scene to see, you know, it broke the head of the bone. As the referee stopped the fight, everybody is in shock because it looks very ugly. I was laughing, got my arm, put it in and it went back out by itself, I put it back again. Then I stood up and I shake my opponent's hand, I congratulate him for his victory.*

"*For the whole time, I was smiling and laughing, making jokes. I remember, people seeing me, they were like, 'What happened? Is it not hurting?' They believed that by being so bad, the fracture, the way that it looks, that the pain was gone, that there was no pain at all. Let me tell you one thing. I never felt so much pain in my life. The victory belonged to my opponent that day, but I would never give him the pleasure of seeing my face in pain.*"

The Japanese fighter wasn't finished with the Gracie family just yet, going on to defeat Renzo's brother Ryan to complete his quartet of Gracie scalps (though Ryan only lost by decision). Sakuraba fully deserved the nickname he would carry into future bouts: the Gracie Hunter. After PRIDE 10, Renzo put up a picture of the moment his arm broke, prominently displayed at the Renzo Gracie Academy. As he told MMAFighting.com, "It was a beautiful lesson. I've taught my students to never believe the match is over until it's over, not until your arm is raised."

Renzo finally got his chance for revenge in November 2014, in a grappling match at Metamoris 5. This time, the fight would end in a draw, both men leaving with their limbs intact.

"THE VICTORY BELONGED TO MY OPPONENT THAT DAY, BUT I WOULD NEVER GIVE HIM THE PLEASURE OF SEEING MY FACE IN PAIN"
- RENZO GRACIE



SOURCES: KID PELIGRO, *THE GRACIE WAY* • GETHIN ALDOUS, *RENZO GRACIE: LEGACY* • SLIDEYFOOT.COM • GLOBAL-TRAINING-REPORT.COM • BLOODYELBOW.COM • IBJJF.ORG • SHERDOG.COM • MMAFIGHTING.COM

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B) Bruce Lee
C) Steven Seagal

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POSITION STUDY

THE DARCE CHOKE

The Darce choke (or D'arce), also called 'no gi brabo choke' (not to be confused with the standard brabo choke), in Portuguese often called triângulo de braço invertido or even triângulo de mão, is a choke variation of the katagatame (arm triangle) and the anaconda choke.

The difference between the Darce and the anaconda choke lies in the positioning of the 'lock', which ultimately defines the way the pressure should be exerted.

The Darce choke is applied by wrapping both arms around the opponent's neck, leaving one arm inside and another one outside the hold. The name 'Darce' derives from an American grappler by the name of Joe D'arce, famed for his use of the choke, though the actual choke may have originated in Germany, created by a luta livre esportiva competitor called Björn Schneckenburger.

THE HISTORY OF THE DARCE CHOKE

As per usual, we would like to explain that grappling is an ancient art form, and as such many positions and techniques MAY have existed prior to these more recent discoveries of positions. That said, the brabo choke became famous in jiu jitsu by the hands (or arms rather) of a black belt named Milton Vieira.

Milton learnt most of his grappling skills through Jefferson "Jop" Pereira, a luta livre coach who (according to Milton) taught a very BJJ oriented grappling style. Vieira eventually moved on to MMA joining the famous Brazilian Top Team (BTT), one of the top mixed martial arts teams in the early early/mid 2000's, to further develop his skills. Zé Mario Sperry, Murilo Bustamante, Ricardo Libório and 'Bebeo' Duarte led BTT.

Milton Vieira's slick submission orientated game fitted perfectly in the philosophy of the group. Milton brought several grappling positions to the team, especially his signature 'anaconda' and the now called Darce chokes, which were picked up with great interest by some of the team's top fighters, including Rodrigo 'Minotauro' Nogueira. Minotauro was the superstar of the team, who at the time was ranked as the number two heavyweight in the world. Rodrigo learnt Vieira's chokes and was very successful at the highest level of MMA competition utilising these same techniques, which raised awareness of the techniques to mainstream BJJ competitors.

With the position gaining international recognition, Daniel D'Dane, the president of Rio de Janeiro's Luta Livre Esportiva federation, was quick to assert luta livre as the creator of the position. In an open letter directed at the media he wrote:

"The 'triângulo de braço invertido' the move with which the athlete Milton Vieira submitted Cro-Cop (E.N.:Bruno Lobato) at Bitteti Combat was developed in the late 1990s in Germany by a student of mine of Norwegian origin, while I was coaching there."

THE NAME

Joe D'arce was a well-known competitor in grappling tournaments of the mid 2000s. A representative of Renzo Gracie and his New York jiu jitsu academy, D'arce learnt the technique from RGA's coach, John Danaher.

Having won several fights making better use of the choke, D'arce caught the eye of another American grappler named Marc Laimon. Laimon labelled the technique "the Darce choke", and being a very well respected grappling coach on the USA west coast, the name started being mentioned in the area to define the position. With the growing popularity of jiu jitsu in the west coast, Darce became the more common name for this technique.

WORDS: ANDRE BORGES, EDITOR AT WWW.BJJHEROES.COM

BELT PROMOTIONS

IF YOU WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED A NEW BELT RECENTLY, THIS PAGE REPRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVOUR THE MOMENT WITH RECOGNITION IN JIU JITSU STYLE! SEND IN DETAILS OF YOUR RECENT PROMOTION, INCLUDING THE RANK YOU ACHIEVED AND YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, AND WE WILL PUBLISH AS MANY AS WE CAN IN OUR MAGAZINE.

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Keith Fletcher was awarded his black belt under head of Checkmat Europe, Chico Mendes, and Rico Vieira.

Pete Thomson received his blue belt from GFT coach, Chris Carmichael, and GFT legend, Denilson Pimenta.

Nick Lim received his blue belt from Pedro Wolff, blackbelt from de la Riva Academy in Copa Cabana.

Danny Borg was promoted to purple belt under Aurelio Brambilla.

Leonardo Fernandez was promoted to brown belt by Vinicius "Draculino" Magalhaes from Gracie Barra Texas.

Raj Bista was awarded his brown belt under head of Checkmat Europe, Chico Mendes.

Peter Lavery received his black belt from the head coach of BJJ Revolution, Rodrigo Mederios, on his last trip to Ireland.

Stuart Freeman was promoted to blue belt at Buckhead Jiu-Jitsu in Atlanta, Georgia, under Sam Joseph.

Kris Davis was promoted to blue belt and Mark Bauer was promoted to brown belt by Raphael Dos Santos and Tim Lukes.

Demitra Shade was promoted to blue belt by instructor Roy Dean.

Noah Barth and Thet Paw Tun were promoted to blue belt by Peter Lawson (2 stripe black belt under Renzo Gracie) at Brooklyn Martial Arts in Brooklyn, NY.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

DON'T NEGLECT THE BASICS...

"Don't neglect the basics." How many times have you had that piece of wisdom recited to you on the mat? In jiu jitsu, and in pretty much every aspect of life, a solid understanding of the basics is essential if you want to progress. As grappling insists on continuously evolving, do we really know what the 'basics' are anymore?

Having first been exposed to martial arts via taekwondo as a kid, I quickly established that while I loved sparring, I had no love for the rigorous repetition of kata. One of the most appealing aspects of jiu jitsu is that once we start to develop basic skills we create platforms to progress creatively along very individual paths – ultimately free from the restrictions of kata. In my eyes, once I had my BJJ basics down, it was time to get creative. It wasn't until spending some extended time in the presence of coral belt and UK BJJ Godfather - Mauricio Gomes - that I really gained an understanding of just how important the basics are.

It may sound stupid considering my coach is Roger Gracie, who is the perfect example of how keeping it simple (or basic) is a sure fire way to success, but I'd say I'm best described as a jiu jitsu fan boy – I LOVE watching and learning crazy techniques. However, Mauricio being in town to teach has had a profound impact on my approach to many 'basic' positions that I'd previously learned and then discarded before moving on to the 'fun stuff'. After just a couple of classes with Mo, I'd picked up enough key details to completely refine some of my basic guard passes, as well as to inject new life into submissions we learn from day one, such as the armbar and collar choke from closed guard.

With such an array of innovative new techniques being posted online by some of the best jiu jitsu fighters in the world, you could be forgiven for not getting too excited about refining your armbar from closed guard. Given my recent experiences, I'd advise everyone that staying true to the basic movements of jiu jitsu at every stage of your journey, not just in the beginning, is not just essential but truly rewarding if given some effort. My two cents.

In light of this, I thought it would be cool for Mauricio to show some basic self-defence techniques for our Master Class section inside this issue. After all, jiu jitsu is in essence a self-defence martial art, so take a look and keep an open mind!

Thanks for picking up our latest issue, and keep training!

CALLUM MEDCRAFT

IT'S SCIENCE:

MICHELLE NICOLINI

BY TYLER BISHOP

AS AN EIGHT TIME IBJJF WORLD CHAMPION AND ADCC CHAMPION, MICHELLE NICOLINI IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FEMALE JIU JITSU COMPETITORS IN HISTORY. KNOWN FOR HER DEVASTATING GUARD AND SUBMISSION ORIENTED GAME, THE CHECKMAT FIGHTER IS ALSO A LEGLOCK AND TRIANGLE CONNOISSEUR.

MICHELLE UTILISED 6 DIFFERENT GUARD POSITIONS TO SWEEP HER OPPONENT

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THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

'It's Science' is brought to you by BishopBjj.com. The goal of BishopBjj.com is to expand and empower the jiu jitsu community by emphasising the science and art of jiu jitsu in fun and exciting ways. We want to highlight what makes jiu jitsu so calculated, but also what makes it so much fun.

76%

OF MICHELLE'S WINS WERE BY SUBMISSION

MICHELLE HAD A 86% WIN RATIO IN HER MATCHES

70%

OF HER SUBMISSIONS CAME FROM THE GUARD

40%

OF HER SUBMISSIONS WERE TRIANGLES

SHE SCORED FIRST OR SUBMITTED IN 12 OF THE 13 MATCHES WON

35%

OF HER SWEEPS WERE SHIN-TO-SHIN SPIDER SWEEPS

NUMBER OF MATCHES OBSERVED	15
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	92
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	10
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	03
OPPONENT WON MATCH	02
TOTAL MATCHES DRAWN	00
TOTAL MATCHES WON	13

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Michelle Nicolini used in this small sample occurred at IBJJF or UAEJJ events, inside her weight division, and in the years 2012-2015. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches. This is a limited sample but - given the estimated amount of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

THE BREAKDOWN

There are few women to have made their mark on the sport of Brazilian jiu jitsu in quite the way Michelle Nicolini has. A mainstay of excellence in the women's division over the past seven years, Nicolini is an active and living legend in sport jiu jitsu. Michelle is known for her willingness to explore multiple weight classes and as an extremely aggressive submission specialist. She has experienced success on just about every major platform that the sport offers, and continues to add to her impressive resume every year.

THE STUDY

Michelle Nicolini is a powerful ambassador for women's jiu jitsu, but don't let her pleasant demeanour fool you; she's a killer on the mat. There are few we've studied with such an impressive submission rate, and even fewer that have hunted down as many feet, ankles, and knees as this female dynamo. Michelle has an extremely aggressive style of jiu jitsu that usually starts from the guard, and rarely gets much further.

In the matches we viewed, Michelle possessed an 86% win rate. Her submission rate for those matches was 76%. This means that she submitted her black belt opponent in three out of every four matches that we observed. It's hard to do much better than that.

Michelle's average match length was just over six minutes. Most of her matches began with her pulling guard (or both her and her opponent pulling guard), and rarely did the match advance much further than those positions. Michelle does her most dangerous work from this position. With a dynamic mix of shin-on-shin, spider guard, and sit-up guard, she is able to throw a brutal mix of leglock, armbar, and triangle attempts at her opponents that they find hard to stifle.

Nearly 40% of Michelle's sweeps started in the spider guard, but don't let those numbers fool you; she used a diverse mix of different sweeps in the matches we recorded. Michelle was able to execute 1.25 sweeps per match, and used over six different positions to do so. Although we did not see her with many chances to pass the guard (the fewest we've recorded) we saw her vary her passes quite a bit, with 50% coming from standing and the other 50% coming from half guard.

When it came to submissions, Nicolini was a master of triangles and leglocks. 50% of her submissions were triangles and 30% were leglock variations. Most of these occurred in her guard, where 70% of her total submissions took place. Her game has proven difficult to escape, as opponents in her guard must battle against being swept and are often forced to concede a submission.

Even though Michelle Nicolini has accomplished almost every major title that the sport offers, she continues to compete to this day. She is the figurehead for Checkmat's growing and impressive women's program, and has become a mainstay of the emerging pro jiu jitsu events. Although it's likely that Michelle will pass the torch to the next generation in the near future, there is no doubt that she remains one of the most dangerous and exciting competitors in all of Brazilian jiu jitsu.

SWEEP (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA	2
50/50	1
SIT UP GUARD	5
SPIDER GUARD	8
X GUARD	1
LEGLOCK USED TO SWEEP	3

SWEEP (TYPE)

X-GUARD	1
TOMANAGI	2
SHIN-TO-SHIN SPIDER	7
SIT UP / SINGLE LEG	5
LEGLOCK SWEEP	3
MISC. OTHER	2

PASS (POSITION)

HALF-GUARD	2
STANDING	2

PASS (TYPE)

LEG DRAG	2
HALF-GUARD	2

TAKING THE BACK

SIDE CONTROL	1
STANDING	1

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

GUARD	7
THE BACK	1
DOUBLE GUARD	2

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

CHOKE FROM BACK	1
TRIANGLE	4
ARMBAR	1
SHOULDER LOCK	1
LEGLOCK	3

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: SHIN-SPIDER GUARD & TRIANGLES

AVOIDED: THE MOUNT & BOTTOM HALF GUARD

TOP TECHNIQUES: SHIN-SPIDER GUARD & TRIANGLES

HISTORY 101: RYAN GRACIE TEAM

The youngest son of Robson Gracie, Ryan was a colourful character, to put it politely. Born in 1974, he made a name for himself as a troublemaker early on, a reputation upon which he would build for the rest of his short life. As Renzo remembered in the *Legacy* documentary:

"My brother Ryan, he's a disgrace [Laughs]. Everything I did in my life that brought trouble to my parents, he gave them at least four times more. You tell the stories and people think you're lying, that you're exaggerating, but they're all true."

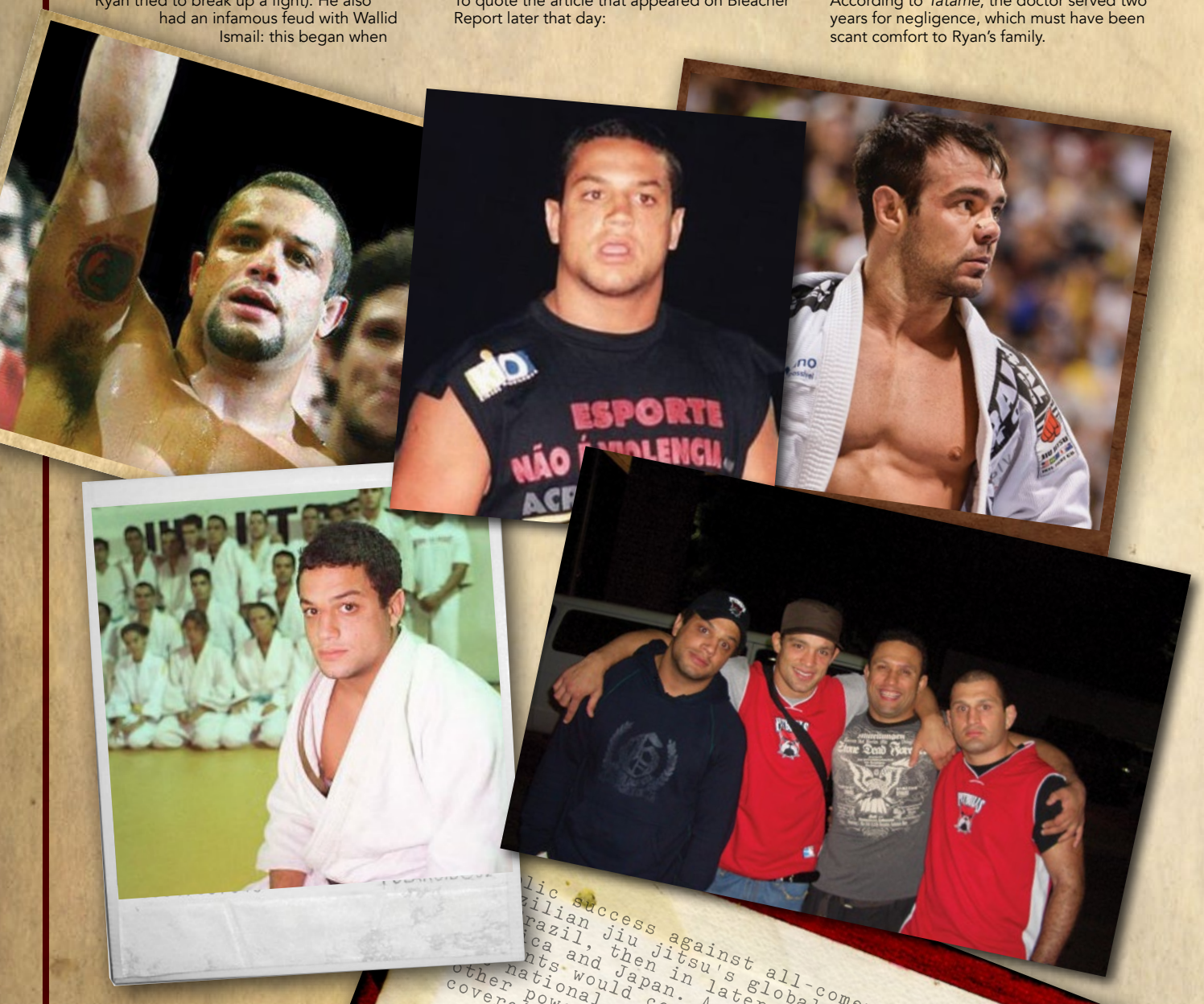
Those stories included multiple run-ins with the law, such as when he was arrested in 2001 after allegedly stabbing a man in a nightclub (Ryan's version of the story is that it was the man's own knife, with which he got cut after Ryan tried to break up a fight). He also had an infamous feud with Wallid Ismail: this began when Ryan punched Wallid in the back of the head at the 1999 Mundials, due to Wallid's loud (but nevertheless accurate) boasting about beating three Gracies in competition. The two men never met in a sanctioned fight, but had numerous confrontations off the mats.

Ryan's behaviour was understandably seen as inappropriate for a jiu jitsu black belt. Marcelo Alonso once asked Robson directly about the situation, to which Robson had a succinct response. "One can also see it differently. Do you know why the academies are full? Because there is a Ryan!" Notoriety had its advantages, according to Ryan's father, no stranger to controversy himself.

Ryan Gracie passed away on the 15th December 2007, though that is probably too gentle a description given the circumstances. To quote the article that appeared on Bleacher Report later that day:

"At 7:00AM, Ryan Gracie was found slumped over and unresponsive in a jail cell in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Gracie had been arrested at approximately 1:30AM for stealing and crashing a car, and then attempting to steal a motorcycle to flee from police. Ryan was hit on the head by the owner of the cycle, whom he had threatened to kill, and then detained by several cyclists until the police arrived."

Ryan had been given a potent cocktail of drugs by the doctor, to "calm him down", including antipsychotics, tranquilizers and relaxants. The cause of death was initially judged as unknown by the coroner. However, according to the author of the Bleacher Report article, a subsequent press release confirmed that in addition to the cocaine already present, Ryan's heart was unable to cope with the many chemicals coursing through his body. According to *Tatame*, the doctor served two years for negligence, which must have been scant comfort to Ryan's family.



Whatever his flaws, Ryan was able to leave behind a legacy in BJJ, as well as a respectable 5-2 record in MMA. He was part of the Gracie Barra team, beginning at the original academy at the age of five. In 1995, he went on to open a school in Sao Paulo with his brother Ralph. That school and the Ryan Gracie team managed to keep producing elite competitors and world champions. Much of the credit surely goes to Celso Vinicius. He had been invited to join the team as an assistant coach by Ryan shortly before his death, which was then upgraded to taking over as head coach

Something of a prodigy, Celso initially also learned his trade at Gracie Barra, starting in 1998. At only 16, he was able to reach the final of a competition against fully grown adults. Facing Thiago Fernandes, the fight went on for 20 minutes, resulting in the two men jointly winning the first prize. Vinicius then won gold as a brown belt at the 2004 Mundials. As a result, he was awarded his black belt on the podium by half guard master Roberto 'Gordo' Correa. 'Celsinho' immediately continued his winning ways at black belt: he can boast of three world titles, winning the Mundials in 2005, 2006 and 2008.

Gabriel Vella, a keen athlete, began training BJJ at the age of 14. Having already trained judo, he followed his brother Thiago to Ryan Gracie's gym in Sao Paulo. Although he received his black belt from Ryan Gracie, other teams would benefit from Vella's achievements.

He went on to win gold at the Mundials in 2002 listed under Gracie Barra, then controversially switched to Alliance, local Sao Paulo rivals.

Still listed under Alliance, Vella won another gold medal at the Mundials in 2009, but he would return home to the Ryan Gracie team.

This time, it was under the experienced eye of new head coach Vinicius. Yet Vella still didn't compete under the Ryan Gracie banner, instead carrying the Gracie Elite name that encompasses several connected teams (including those of Rilion, Renzo, Ralph, Cesar and Ryan Gracie).

It is in keeping with Ryan Gracie's tough reputation that the most famous female competitor from his gym, Talita Nogueira, is nicknamed Treta, which roughly translates to 'bullshit'. This surprising nickname is due to a tattoo on her stomach, which she got to show her support for a punk band of the same name. Treta briefly took up judo, but her training was cut short by pregnancy.

She certainly made up for lost time, beginning BJJ at Cicero Costha as a 20 year old and earning her blue belt in a mere four months. It only took another six months to get to purple belt, with the brown belt arriving in 2009. Her decision to switch to the Ryan Gracie team was rewarded with a gold medal at the 2011 Mundials (though like Vella, she was listed as part of Gracie Elite).Back then, the top division for women was merged between brown and black belts: Treta was promoted to black belt on the podium by Francisco Santana, with her hero Kyra Gracie tying on the belt. No doubt Kyra's uncle Ryan would have been proud.

TIMELINE

1974
Robson Gracie's third son, Ryan Gracie, is born

1995
Ryan founds a school in Sao Paulo with older brother Ralph

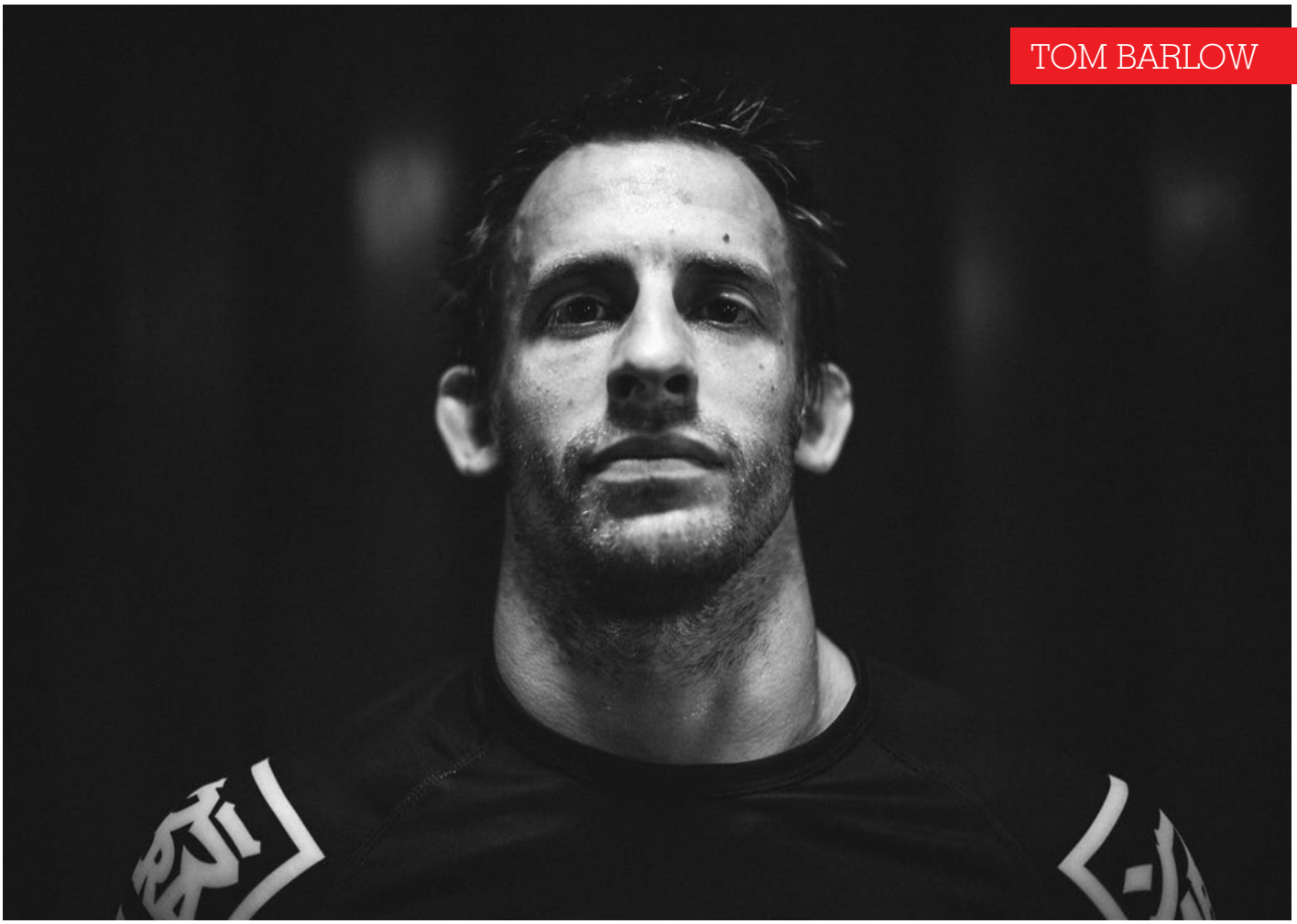
1999
Ryan has the first of many major altercations with Wallid Ismail

2005
Celso Vinicius wins the first of his three Mundials titles

2007
Ryan passes away after a botched attempt by his doctor to help "calm him down"

2011
Talita 'Treta' Nogueira wins gold in the combined brown/ black belt division at the World Championships

SOURCES: MARCELO ALONSO ET AL, *DIE FAMILIE GRACIE UND DIE REVOLUTION IM JIU JITSU* (BUDO INTERNATIONAL) • GETHIN ALDOUS, *RENZO GRACIE: LEGACY* • GLOBAL-TRAINING-REPORT.COM • FIGHTWORKSPODCAST.COM • BLOODYELBOW.COM • BJJHEROES.COM • BLEACHERREPORT.COM • IBJJF.ORG • GRACIEMAG.COMM



TOM BARLOW

JACK OF ALL TRADES, MASTER OF ... QUITE A FEW, ACTUALLY

Tom Barlow had opened his Masters Academy before ever tying a white belt around his waist. As a 4th Dan in KTX Kickboxing, a Combat Submission Wrestling (CSW) coach and former lodger of Erik Paulson, the now Braulio Estima black belt is a world champion grappler in multiple disciplines and one of the UK's very best.

You've just got back from teaching at Masters Academy in Plymouth. Tell us about that place because you opened it before you even put on a white belt didn't you?

That's correct, yeah. Explaining my history is probably the best way to tell you about it because that led to the academy.

I originally started judo at ten or eleven, did it for about a year and a half and then had to stop – it was hard for my parents to get me there. I did okay, got to a green belt, which is cool but when I was about 16 I saw my first Bruce Lee movie and I just wanted to be him. That led me to hunting out various martial arts that could get me there, the first being Lau Gar, a combination of kung fu and kickboxing. That led to Thai boxing until I was about 18 and I moved to university in Plymouth, from a small village in Cambridge.

There was a Jeet Kune Do club there, which is obviously Bruce Lee's martial art and my instructor, Anton St James, really explored all areas of JKD. He has a phenomenal amount of qualifications, he was one of the first coaches under Master Toddy in Thai boxing, he's now a ninth degree black belt in Eskrima, a huge amount of stuff.

Anyway, his philosophy was to be able to show people various stuff and allow them to choose what was for them. I'd seen a little bit of the early UFC stuff and I was keen to learn it, but there wasn't really anywhere to do that back in 2000. I think at the time Roberto Atalla was in Bournemouth somewhere, I don't think Braulio was here yet. You also had Roger Brooking up in London, Mauricio Gomes, and it was in 2005 that they'd just promoted the first group of black belts.

I used to get together with friends, do a bit of boxing, try and have a roll and have a laugh. We were lucky that Erik Paulson used to come to the South West regularly so I got to spend some time with him, which led me to go to the States and train with him in 2004. I spent a month over there, living in his house, completely lost and hanging around with him. He was training Ken Shamrock at the time for his fight with Kimo Leopoldo. So I was sparring with him, which was entertaining to say the least – I've never been hit so hard in my life.

At the same time, when training at the Inosanto Academy where Erik taught, there was a guy called Paul Kelly who runs some Martial Arts Concepts stuff. He was based near Birmingham and had just started training with Braulio – I hadn't a clue who he was! Erik knew though and told me to go; I really trusted his opinion a lot. I got back to the UK, basically taught guys in the area everything I knew in nogi and MMA stuff and had my first MMA fight in 2004. It was 2005 that I met Braulio at a SENI in a random meeting, told him I wanted to train with him and I arranged to go up whenever I could. I'd drive to Birmingham, train for an hour, then drive back to Plymouth to teach in the evening.

Wow, so how long was the average drive to Birmingham and back?

It was a 400 mile round trip, so it would take me about three and a half hours up and three and a half hours back depending on traffic (laughs). So I was pretty crazy to say the least.

That's pretty much putting a day aside for an hour of training!

Yeah, pretty much! The thing was, I used to do that and then come back and straight to teaching that evening. We didn't have assistant instructors teaching, I just had to be back for 5 o'clock, so my day would be a session with Braulio at like 11 am. He would always be late, because Braulio's always late (laughs). So I'd be getting up at like 6 o'clock, drive to Birmingham for 11, we'd finish about 1 and then I had to get back for teaching. That would be right through to like 9.30 but it was what I had to do to keep progressing.

Man, what's that done for your self-discipline and progression as a fighter?

For me, in some ways, I really don't regret that. If I had an instructor regularly I would be at a better standard now. In my jiu jitsu I've kind

"I WANT TO BE A COMPLETE MARTIAL ARTIST. I WANT TO BE ABLE TO STAND AND STRIKE, I WANT TO BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU DOWN, SUBMIT YOU, WHATEVER I HAVE TO DO, BECAUSE TO ME IT MAKES SENSE"

of learned how to do things, not been shown how to do things, so I know there's areas that I fundamentally don't have a good grasp of. At the same time, by having to learn everything myself – it was never taught to me, I'd be seeing it, trying it and working it out and then trying to apply it to people. That's how a lot of my technique has developed. Pretty much up until brown belt I'd never done drilling. It was pretty much figuring it out myself so for that it was kind of beneficial, my level progressed pretty quickly. Maybe it was because of the stuff I'd done with Erik in the past, but I got my blue belt off Braulio in something crazy like two or three sessions, then I got my purple belt ten months later.

I starting progressing very, very quickly and I think it's because I was really trying to break down the techniques to try and understand how I could apply them. I was teaching them as well so I needed to know how to get that technique across to somebody. In some ways it was very good, going to a competition, nobody would travel like I did so it's kind of a bonus because I've put a lot of time and a lot of effort, money as well, into pursuing jiu jitsu. It's a good mental exercise.

So your training sounded a lot less monkey see, monkey do and a bit more trial and error.

It really was on a trial and error basis. I would always choose the lightest person, the beginner, so you could kind of muscle through technique a little bit. Then I would gradually progress through weights and skill levels and that's how I would learn it the majority of the time – but it was a huge amount of trial and error.

In a way it's not bad. If I would be on top and get swept or something I would take the attitude of 'right, now I get to work that thing from bottom I've been trying". I would always go into training having different things from each position that I wanted to work on. Either something Braulio taught me or off a DVD I had.

I never had anyone to tell me to adjust a grip or correct my posture or anything, so in a sense it was just figure it out as in depth as I could. I guess that some of the fundamental concepts of my game might be wrong, maybe the way I move my hips, or maybe I may turtle a little more than I need to. All those little things, but overall it seems to have worked for me.

I mean, once I got to brown belt and I started getting a little bit more exposed then I started drilling a lot more and I found that it was a beneficial thing for me. It really started to help me apply technique. There are different ways to drill but the correct one, in my opinion, is gradual difficulty and you should never just go through the motions, you should always be thinking whilst you do it. How to do it cleaner, how to do it faster, so when you drill like that, a technique will enter your game a lot quicker.

I noticed a big difference when I did that so now I fall between the two, I like a balance of drilling and live application.

As a lighter guy, do you feel you have to alter your training or intensity at all to keep your technique sharp?

I completely think so. As a smaller guy you have to have a really solid understanding of technique, but the thing is, if you're not drilling you're never going to understand what it feels like. You need to feel how the technique is with the intensity you'd need to be able to do it to somebody. If you go straight into resistance then you're never going to get that.

I like to work with people who will absolutely smash me, but I also like to work with people that I know can't. I'm going to get my cardio pushed insanely by the big guy, my defence too, but against the guy who I know I can beat … I get to really feel how I need to apply that technique. It's a good thing to do.

And your techniques do work Tom Barlow, because you've won the Worlds twice, Europeans, you're a six time British champ and that's just in jiu jitsu. You've also competed in the World Grappling Games, ADCC too. You sound happy to ply your grappling abilities wherever the opportunity presents.

What a segue (laughs). I don't mind about the rules too much because for me it's about challenging myself. I'm not the biggest fan of the ADCC rule set, but you get the best guys going there so it's a good way to challenge yourself. It's the same with IBJJF, non-IBJJF, Polaris for example – it's just a fantastic way to keep developing. Without challenge, you will stagnate.

I tend to put more effort in if I have a competition coming up because I have a goal I want to achieve. Yeah, I'm really happy to apply it anywhere, I mean I even got into judo for a while at brown belt with Steve Squires, we used to trade techniques – he'd show me judo and I'd show him BJJ. I solely did that because I recognised every top guy needs his stand up and in England we don't really have those wrestling opportunities, so the next closest thing I could see was judo.

I also saw at the World Grappling Games in Switzerland that Raphael Davis, now an MMA fighter and then an NCAA wrestler (I think), fought a Japanese Olympic judoka in the nogi and I expected the wrestler to dominate, but the judo guy could not get taken down, swept Davis and went to knee-on-belly and won the fight. It showed me that the finesse of judo is fantastic. The attitude seems to be that you'd rather say, "my grappling is legit. Period." Not "my grappling is legit (but only under the right circumstances)?"

I want to be a complete martial artist. I want to be able to stand and strike, I want to be able to take you down, submit you, whatever I have to do, because to me it makes sense. It's not just about winning a competition or two, it's about being as complete as possible.

And how has that quest in life served you? Now you're no longer at the Royal Mail, you're teaching full time, so how is life for you?

My life at the moment is pretty awesome. I spent a long time building up my academy to the point where I can take time off and spend time outside of the academy, to train elsewhere. I'm planning on spending a few months in California training because I dedicated myself in my twenties to my business and passion. I didn't want to run a hobby academy, I wanted to run a business and now I have employees, protocols, practices, all of those things that then allow me to pursue other things I want to do.

I've set myself a goal to compete at the Worlds as a black belt, because I don't currently have enough points. My goal is to qualify, so I'm going about doing that. But life is pretty amazing, I can't lie. It's been challenging along the way, consistently, We built the academy from 7 am until 3 pm, we'd clean up and teach until 9 pm, do more construction, finishing at 11 pm and then start again the next day.

I think the work I put in then helped me get to where I am now; it's run well, it's professional and I'm stoked.

Fruits of your labour.

Exactly, I get to pursue my passion as much as I want to.

And it's taken you all over the world … most recently to Cardiff, Wales.

It did take me to Cardiff, for Polaris.

You fought a very talented young competitor in Gianni Grippo and you lost via heel hook, but what was that experience like for you?

Polaris was amazing. I'm pretty fortunate that I've had the experience with Metamoris, FIVE Grappling league and now Polaris. I've fought in IBJJF competitions, other grappling competitions and by far, Polaris was the most organised.

The guys did a fantastic job and the location they chose, in terms of being a competitor, was perfect. It was close, right in the city centre. I wanted to check the mats out because for me, I like to get comfortable in the venue, I like to go early and move around on the mats a little bit. It was easy for me to do that, there was good food, I could go back and forth to the hotel if I needed to. Everybody was fantastic and at no point did I not know what was going on.

It was an awesome, awesome experience. Then the card? Man, I'm just as much of a fan as a competitor. It was fantastic, real interesting matches! You've got guys who perhaps don't compete as much who have fantastic jiu jitsu, like Shaolin and Robson Moura. I cannot say enough positive things about that whole experience really.

For more information on Tom and his academy visit www.mastersacademy.co.uk

PAUL BRIDGES

THE MAN AT THE HELM OF DARK STAR JIU JITSU

Paul Bridges understands the importance of having a balanced life. As well as being an active competitor who has been putting it all on the line for almost two decades, he is also a devoted family man and runs daily classes at his own academy.

"As I'm teaching all the time I can't take a month off to train for competitions, but I'm fine with that because my priority is supporting everyone else," he says. "My biggest love within jiu jitsu is sharing my knowledge, helping people and giving them more confidence."

He is particularly keen to promote what he refers to as 'Total Jiu Jitsu', defined as a style that encompasses self-defence, punch protection, striking and defending against weapons, as well as training members for gi and nogi competitions.

While he sees competition as important – "it reveals how you are likely to react in stressful situations" – he remains true to the art's self-defence heritage and has little time for those that judge an instructor's effectiveness by the number of medals they have won.

"I'm as greedy as they come in the academy and want to do a mixture of everything, but the backbone is always being able to defend yourself when someone is trying to hurt you in a street fight," he says. "That's the most important part."

It's a fact acknowledged by his long-term friend and training partner, Marc Walder, who awarded Paul his black belt in 2009 in front of Mauricio 'Motta' Gomes, one of the so-called 'famous five' who received their dan grades from the late Rolls Gracie.

"Paul is a great ambassador for the old school guard because he promotes the Helio Gracie philosophy of technique over size, speed and strength," says Walder. "It's about practical, applicable, street self-defence techniques that work in all cases."

Despite the onerous teaching demands of being at the helm of Dark Star Jiu Jitsu (based in East Sussex, England) Paul, a 40-year-old married father of three, certainly can't be accused of shying away from challenges on the mats.

He has taken part in the World Jiu Jitsu Championships, won gold at the first European Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Championships, and is still competing regularly. His most recent appearance, against ex UFC fighter Leigh Remedios earlier this year, ended in a draw.

"I like leading from the front and don't believe I should encourage anyone to do anything unless I've done it myself," he says. "People don't realise I've been competing since 1998 and my first time I was in California."

Having already achieved a black belt in freestyle karate, Paul fell totally in love with jiu jitsu in the wake of Royce Gracie's historic performance in the UFC 1, and started training in the art with Marc Walder – back when the only training materials were VHS videocassettes!

Although the pair lost contact for a few years, their paths crossed again when Marc returned from training with the Gracies in California. By then Paul was running his own academy, but was soon combining teaching duties with training under Marc in Essex.

He also attended as many seminars as possible, including a six-week stint at Rickson Gracie's academy in California. "I trained multiple times a day, which was really tough on my body, but I wanted to get in as much as I could in the time I was out there," he recalls.

This has been a key theme in Paul's jiu jitsu development.

"I've had help from various people along the way, such as Royce Gracie, Marc (Walder), Mauricio Gomes and Roger Gracie, but my situation has meant I've been unable to commit to training with them all the time," he explains. "It's been left to me to basically put it all together."

Everything he was taught at seminars and in class he'd memorise to teach his students back at the academy. "I only started teaching out of necessity as I wanted to be able to continue training back home."

Even so, numerous talented students have passed through Paul's door, including Jack Sebastian Magee, who credits him with teaching him how to use BJJ in a "smart and effective way", as well as the importance of testing it.

"Paul is a great instructor whose teaching style suits everyone," Jack says. "He's a humble guy, a great father, and has a calm, but effective, approach to life."

Such lessons have helped lay the foundations for Magee's career.

"My style has changed a lot over the years and I have had many coaches from around the world at all different levels but you never forget your first teacher," he adds. "Paul's attention to detail and passion for technique over power will always ring true."

It's clear that jiu jitsu is a vitally important part of Paul's make-up. An enthusiastic talker in class - there's rarely a situation for which he can't find a jiu jitsu themed analogy - he also credits it with changing him as a person.

"It's certainly made me calmer," he says. "Although I've never gone out looking for trouble I am naturally a fiery person who had a lot of anger issues when I was younger. However, since I've been training I've had altercations and I've been far more relaxed."

He puts this down to learning how to cope under pressure on the mat.

"If you start losing it mentally because someone's got you in a tough position then you're going to do something silly," he says. "If you can't handle the pressure then you're going to crack. There's nowhere to hide in jiu jitsu – everything's exposed."

Within the last few years he has managed to turn jiu jitsu into his full-time occupation, having previously taught just in the evenings and weekends while spending the days doing every conceivable job from cleaning windows to digging graves. In addition, he has attracted the support of Tatami Fightwear as his sponsor.

He's also in the enviable position of Dark Star being a real family affair with his wife, Ali (a brown belt) running classes for women on Saturdays, and the youngest member of his pack, seven-year-old Neo, already a jiu jitsu enthusiast. "None of this would be possible without the support of Ali," he says. "She enables me to do what I truly love for a living."

He also acknowledges the help and support he gets from fellow Dark Star instructors, Tom Watson, Mark Dayrell and Owen Elphick. "They always have my back through thick and thin – and it's something I very much appreciate."

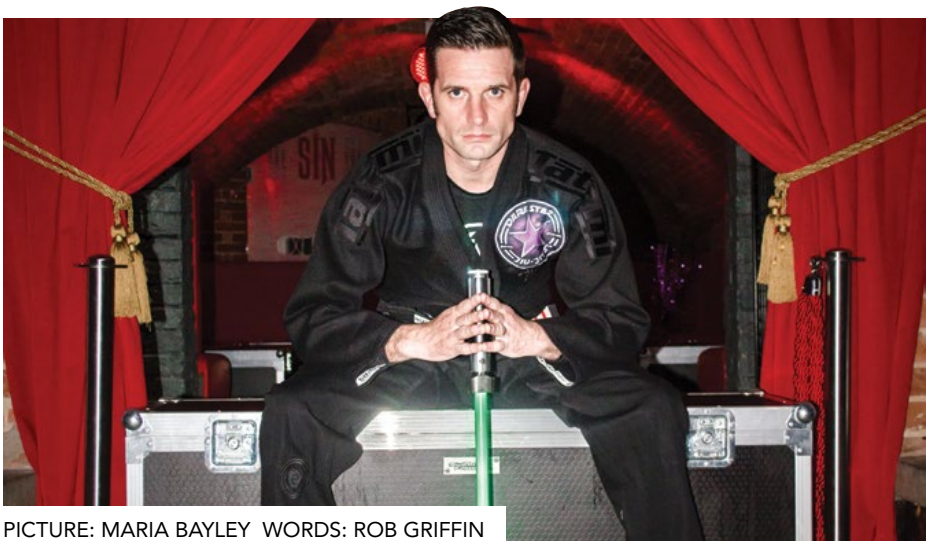
Although Paul prides himself on running an academy where the atmosphere is friendly and supportive, he is keen to stress this doesn't equate to being weak. In fact, the team is enjoying its most successful year on the competition circuit with an impressive medal haul.

"It's a sharing environment where everyone is looking to help each other but that doesn't mean it's soft – that's a misconception," he says. "Our aim isn't to hurt each other but to train hard and improve our technique, cardio, strength and timing."

Having spent the best part of two decades in jiu jitsu – and overcoming injuries such as popped knees and busted ribs along the way – Paul insists he's delighted with where he is at this stage of his life and the camaraderie within his academy.

"The bottom line is that I am really passionate about jiu jitsu," he says. "It's given me so much in my life that I just want to share it with as many people as possible."

Paul would like to thank his sponsor, Tatami Fightwear, for all their support.



PICTURE: MARIA BAYLEY WORDS: ROB GRIFFIN

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FEATURE

MIND OVER MATTER

WORDS: FELIX RODRIGUEZ

IN THE WORLD OF BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU, RUBENS "COBRINHA" CHARLES IS A MAN WHO NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION. SIMPLY PUT, COBRINHA IS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMPETITORS EVER TO HAVE STEPPED ON A JIU JITSU MAT.

The Alliance representative has been an ever-present force to be reckoned with in the lightweight division since 2006, having taken gold multiple times against elite competitors in the world's most prestigious Brazilian Jiu Jitsu tournaments. His resume speaks for itself; Cobrinha's long list of athletic accolades include being a four time World Champion, both in gi and nogi, a two time ADCC Champion, and a three time Pan American Champion. The man known as 'Little Cobra' has leveraged his athletic ability, work ethic and tenacity in order to become one of the best jiu jitsu practitioners of our time. Jiu Jitsu Style caught up with Cobrinha to discuss his career, training regime, teaching philosophy and what the future holds for him. This is his story.

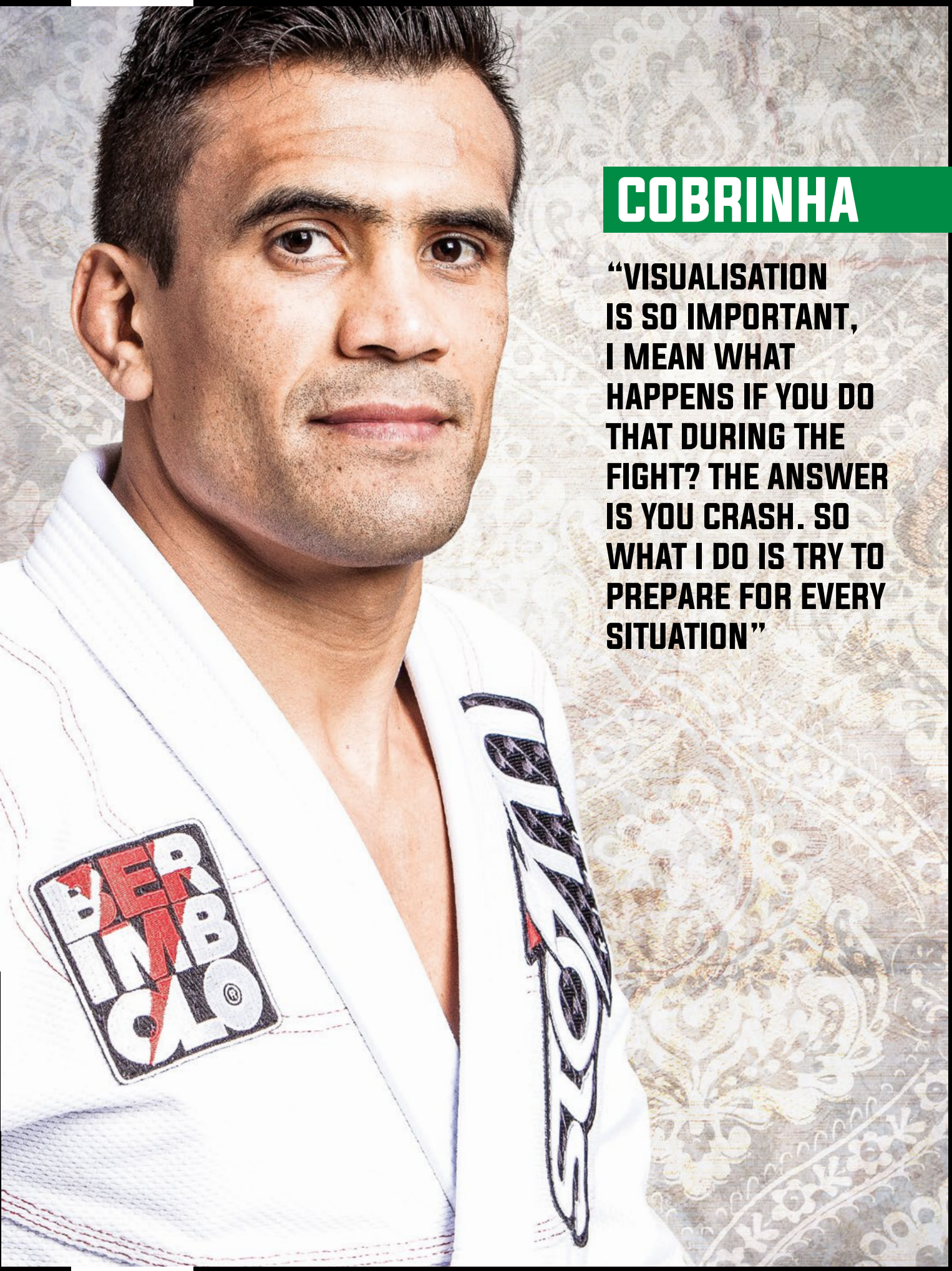
FROM BERIMBAUS TO BERIMBOLOS

Cobrinha is a gifted athlete who could have excelled at any sport he tried his hand at. Growing up in Brazil he was an avid football fan, and like most kids from his country, he briefly entertained the idea of becoming a football player before finding his true passion in martial arts.

Although hard to believe, Cobrinha did not start training in BJJ until his early twenties. Prior to devoting himself to jiu jitsu his initial exposure to martial arts came through capoeira; Brazil's first indigenous fighting system. Brazilian slaves of African descent, who needed a way to defend themselves while not having access to weapons, used music to mask the techniques that eventually developed into this martial art. Their system looks like a dance to the untrained eye, but in actuality these techniques are an incredibly acrobatic display of fighting, based off a rhythmic sway called "ginga."

When Cobrinha first saw Capoeira Mestres practising their craft he abandoned his football aspirations and decided to devote himself fully to learning this martial art. Although jiu jitsu is his true love, he still holds capoeira near to his heart and attributes much of his success in BJJ to his capoeira base. He notes, "I started when I was very young, I tell everyone that does BJJ that they should do a little bit of capoeira. It has helped me and I've been doing it for 14 years. It helped me big time with the flexibility, the coordination, the agility, and developing my strength. I think it's very similar to yoga because you can work all the muscles of your body by practising it."

PICTURES: RICHARD KNAPP



COBRINHA

"VISUALISATION IS SO IMPORTANT, I MEAN WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO THAT DURING THE FIGHT? THE ANSWER IS YOU CRASH. SO WHAT I DO IS TRY TO PREPARE FOR EVERY SITUATION"

Cobrinha dedicated himself wholeheartedly to learning capoeira under Mestre Antonio Zacaria and eventually became a Contra Mestre, which is the second highest ranking in this art. Like many other martial artists who fall in love with jiu jitsu his attention shifted to BJJ after trying a class for the first time and having no way to defend himself against the attacks of a savvy grappler.

He recalls, "I was doing my capoeira and at the same gym I was teaching at they started a BJJ program. A friend of mine who was a black belt in taekwondo invited me to come over and check it out. I said, 'What is jiu jitsu, what are you talking about?' It was very new and he told me to check it out and see if I liked it. So I went in and tried it and this kid was throwing me all around and I couldn't do anything; he had me in all these crazy positions! So I said, 'OK, maybe this was not my day. I am going to come back tomorrow and see if I can do better.' And I came back the next day and it was worse. So I decided I have to start training in this and that's how I got into BJJ."

Humbled in defeat, but not deterred, Cobrinha went through the same growing pains novice jiu jitsu practitioners go through when facing more experienced grapplers, but he was intrigued and quitting was not an option. "I can't lie to you, in the beginning it was frustrating because I came from another martial art and I felt like, 'wait a second, I don't know anything,' so I was going to come back the next day and try again, like I said. It was frustrating but like a good frustration because when I see an obstacle in my life I want to overcome it. I want to transfer the frustration and make it positive. That's the way I see life. That's what I did with jiu jitsu. Instead of quitting BJJ I stuck with it and slowly started getting better every single day. It wasn't that easy, the transition for me, starting a new martial art from the beginning. It was like I started at the beginning, but because of my prior knowledge of capoeira [the transition became gradually less difficult]," said Cobrinha.

FROM EQUIPE BUSHIDO TO ALLIANCE

'A black belt is a white belt who never quit,' is a very popular saying in Brazilian jiu jitsu. Cobrinha was well on his way to attaining the highest ranking in his original martial art and could have easily quit his jiu jitsu career before it even began, but quitting was never an option for him. After being humbled in those first classes he became determined to replicate his capoeira successes in the Gentle Art, applying himself with the same dedication and zeal he displayed while training in his first fighting style.

He officially began his jiu jitsu education 15 years ago under Mauro Pacifico's Equipe Bushido in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and stayed with his first instructor until reaching the rank of brown belt. His passion for the art and commitment to learning helped him earn this rank in "about three years." His dedication showed on the mats, and he soon started turning heads in Brazil's competition scene. One of the people who noticed Cobrinha's potential was none other than Fernando Augusto 'Terere' who, shortly after recognising that Cobrinha was a star in the making, promptly invited him to come to train at his newly formed gym.

"*PSYCHOLOGY OF CHAMPIONS* IS A BOOK THAT I READ OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER. IT ALWAYS HELPS ME. EVERY TIME I READ IT I FIND SOMETHING THAT HELPS ME"

Cobrinha made the move to TT Team with the blessing of his original instructor, Mauro Pacifico, and quickly blossomed under Terere's tutelage. According to Cobrinha, the switch was life changing. "After joining Terere's team in Sao Paulo is when I started to make a lot of progress in training and it helped me big time." The experience of training under Terere and Eduardo Telles allowed Cobrinha to develop the style he is known for, and training with teammates like Andre Galvao and Lucas Lepri allowed him to test his technique daily against elite-level competition. Cobrinha recalls his days as a TT Team member fondly.

"The team was new, they were trying to build up the team and that is when Terere invited me over to kind of do a test and see if I could adapt over there and stay over there. And you know I like challenge in my life, and it was going to be a challenge, but I was going to overcome this and catch up. It was an amazing experience, and just the other day I sent him a message thanking him for the opportunity he gave to me, because without the opportunity that he gave to me I would not be where I am today. Terere has many great qualities, but what stuck with me the most was the consistency with the training and instruction. That is one thing that I wanted to make sure I kept when I had my own school."

When Terere's well-documented substance abuse issues reached their peak, TT Team disbanded, and Cobrinha was in need of a new home. Despite his struggles, Terere saw to it that Cobrinha's jiu jitsu training would not lower in quality by sending him to train under one of his own masters, Fabio 'The General' Gurgel. Cobrinha, once again with his master's blessing, made the switch from Team TT to Alliance and began training under Gurgel; a mentor who he continues to learn from to this day. When discussing his time under 'The General' Cobrinha noted, "With Fabio I got a lot. I started to learn how to do business, not just [being a] fighter, [I learned to] have more patience with some situations, and also learned how to teach better."

Cobrinha continued to expand his knowledge base as an Alliance representative, and his skill set grew exponentially. The gold medals started piling up and his instructors rewarded his hard work and dedication with a black belt in 2005. He received his much-deserved Faixa Preta after an Alliance in-house tournament where all his instructors were present. "Terere was there when Gurgel and Romero 'Jacare' Cavalcanti decided to give me the black belt. They gave me my black belt under Terere's guidance," said Cobrinha.

By 2007 Cobrinha was a two time IBJJF World Champion and Pan American World Champion. Around this time he followed in the footsteps of many other high-level Brazilian competitors and eventually migrated north to the United States in order to further his career. The move to Alliance's U.S. headquarters was another life changing event for him.

Cobrinha notes, "I'm very, very lucky to attract good people in my life and I was at the Pan-Ams in 2007, I believe, when I was invited by Fabio and Jacare to teach a seminar at Jacare's school in Georgia. I accepted and went there, and I think it was one of the biggest seminars at the time. It was Marcelo Garcia, Fabio, Jacare and I teaching the seminar, and it was an amazing experience. So after that Jacare invited me to stay over there for a few weeks to see if I could adapt and after that he came up to me and said, 'listen, I'm not going to pay you a salary for right now. I'm going to see if you like it and if you like it then I'm going to do everything the right way and apply for your visa and pay you a salary.' To this I said, 'OK, no problem,' so I was there with him doing kind of like a test and figuring out what he likes and I did well and he applied for my visa and I was there for three and a half years with him."

FORGING HIS OWN PATH

After close to four years of training under Romero Cavalcanti's wing, Cobrinha felt it was time to venture out on his own and start his own jiu jitsu academy. Always gracious and humble, he recalls his time in Georgia with Jacare as crucial in his development as a jiu jitsu instructor. "[Working with Jacare] was an amazing experience. I think it's every athlete's dream to have their own school and I was there teaching, learning about the business, how to deal with a different culture and that's where I learned a lot, teaching with Jacare." Cobrinha took what he learned and set out to forge his own path, eventually settling in Los Angeles, California.

Cobrinha was already widely regarded as an elite competitor when he decided to open his own academy, and the successes of students like Sergio Moraes and Michael Langhi, who both became world champions under his guidance, and his own son, Kennedy Leonardo Maciel, who became a Pan American Champion with less than a year of training, quickly helped him gain recognition as a world-class instructor as well.

When describing his success as an instructor, Cobrinha is quick to recognise the influence his own instructors had on him. He describes his teaching philosophy as a continuation of what he learned as a student. "For my teaching philosophy, and [my instructors] because I learned from all of them, success is not to just make champions on the mat, but to make champions off the mat as well. That is the challenge we have every single day, to make a better person. A fighter we know, we have the recipe and we tell them what to do and if they follow the recipe it will be easy, they will become a champion. I want to see if they will also become a champion in life as well. That is my philosophy and that is what I learned from [my instructors]."

Cobrinha believes the Alliance recipe for success is simple in principle, but not always easy to follow in practice. For his students to succeed on and off the mats, they must follow the blueprint he swears by to this day. He tells his students that if you train your mind properly the rest will fall into place and take care of itself.

THINKING LIKE A CHAMPION

Cobrinha believes that mind and heart trump physical ability. He is a huge proponent of the mental game, and avidly reads self-help books to strengthen his will to win and obtain a psychological edge over his opposition. To him, if an athlete's mindset isn't right, the chances of success in elite-level competitions greatly decrease, so he prepares for this daily. According to Cobrinha, winning is first and foremost a question of mind over matter.

He noted, "First I prepare mentally. It's self-talk every day. I believe we were taught the negative, 'oh I don't know if my body can do that, I don't know if I can do that.' Once you overcome that mental blockage then you can come to the gym and train, and you'll be able to do whatever you need to do. But if you don't condition your mind and you aren't positive every single day then you won't be able to accomplish anything in your life. That's what I do first of all. Then I try to prepare for every situation possible that I might be facing in the competition and for me I feel that's the best way I can prepare myself for any kind of challenge."

Cobrinha believes in the law of attraction; positive thinking will help yield positive results. When it comes to strengthening the mental game he highly recommends reading self-help books, visualising scenarios to prepare for adverse circumstances and maintaining a can-do attitude throughout training. "I like to read and I like to talk to myself positively. I like to read a lot of self-help books, which help keep your mind positive. You can't wake up thinking, 'Oh I don't feel like training today, I don't want to train.' So how do I prepare my mind for that? I go to bed listening to something positive and I wake up listening to something positive to guide me and give me the motivation to do what I need to do," said Cobrinha.

One book that Cobrinha has found particularly beneficial is James J. Barrell's *Psychology of Champions: How to Win at Sports and Life with the Focus Edge of Super Athletes*. Cobrinha is as passionate about this book as he is about jiu jitsu. When describing the positive effect Barrell's book had on him he noted, "Psychology of Champions is a book that I read over and over and over and over. It always helps me. Every time I read it I find something that helps me. I write it down as a reminder and it helps me big time. Another thing is visualisation, where I can visualise every situation that can happen to me at the competition. I always tell this to my students and some people think, 'Oh he is crazy; how in the world am I just going to keep drilling in my mind?' but you have to, because if you think you are going to drill in your mind just one week before the competition, it's not going to happen.

"If you are drilling in your mind and reading and listening to someone like a motivational speaker for just one week and then you face

"WHEN YOU HAVE DISCIPLINE YOU BUILD GOOD HABITS AND SOON ENOUGH YOU'LL SEE THAT THESE HABITS ARE HELPING YOU. YOU HAVE TO BUILD THESE HABITS AND BE CONSISTENT AND KEEP DOING IT"

an obstacle in competition, what can happen is sometimes you lose your confidence and then you have to overcome it during the situation and that is the hard part. In competition it's the same, you know? You're doing so well and you're almost passing someone's guard, but the person has such a good guard and the person almost recovers their position. [Without proper mental training] what do you do usually? What the person does is start losing their confidence.

"Visualisation is so important, I mean what happens if you do that during the fight? The answer is you crash. So what I do is try to prepare for every situation. Perfect example, a person grabs my sleeve and he has a really good grip and I think that he has a good grip and that thought gets sent to the brain. Then maybe the person gets a sense of that thought. That cannot happen ever. So what do I do? I think, 'OK, no problem, I'm going to be able to address this grip and I'll be able to move on and I'll be able to strip this grip over here.' This is something that I will always try to overcome during the fight. I know it's hard to do that, but you have to practise; the self-talking and all of that starts here at the gym. It all starts here, and trust me, at the competition you make it look easier.

"For example, the other day I was fighting and this guy had such a good guard and he was very flexible. For six minutes I was fighting, and fighting, and I was thinking I have to close this guy's guard. So I took a deep breath and caught my breath, and instead of passing his guard I decided, I'm going to turn him a little on his back and take his back and BOOM! But to do this I had to keep thinking positively because if I don't I'm going to crash. And trust me, this situation happens with the best fighters in the world. When you're winning it's easy, but I want to see what's going to happen during the fight - what are you going to do? Are you going to crash or are you going to keep going? Are you going to overcome it, and whatever is next? Sometimes people think they are going to do cardio, strength, conditioning, but they forget one thing and that is the mind. If they don't condition the mind - trust me - it's so hard to overcome anything in life."

STRENGTHEN YOUR MIND AND THE REST WILL FALL INTO PLACE

When looking at Cobrinha's successes as a competitor and instructor it's hard to argue against his philosophy. He sees the mind as the engine that drives the body to achieve new heights that may have once seemed unreachable. That said, he recognises that even the strongest mental game needs to be backed up with hard work, diligence and sound technique. Although he sees great value in sparring, for Cobrinha, proper physical preparation starts and ends with repetition. Above all else, when it comes to preparing physically, he believes that a jiu jitsu athlete's body is best conditioned through constant drilling.

He noted, "I'm the type of person who loves to drill. I love it. Some people will say 'Oh, that drilling doesn't work at all,' but what they don't realise is that drilling requires discipline. When you have discipline you build good habits, and soon enough you'll see that these habits are helping you. You have to build these habits and be consistent and keep on doing it. That's what I love. I learned it from capoeira, and in capoeira you have to practise both sides. This is a practice that I've kept with.

"So I drill; I do live position training and then I do the sparring session. So all three of those things that I do for competition make an amazing combination. Some people will say, 'Oh I just go to the gym' and they want to take people on the mat sparring, and they say, 'Oh I get better' and yes they do, but I feel like there is no control without drilling; it's sloppy and sometimes that's why people quit. And [when discussing the advantages of drilling] I think that my career speaks for itself."

The combination of Cobrinha's mental and physical preparation has undoubtedly made him one of the most successful competitors ever to put on a gi. Throughout his career he has faced a "who's-who" of elite-level grapplers that have pushed his mental fortitude to its limits. He has experienced the highs and lows of competition on the world's biggest stages and has nothing but respect for the men he's beaten to win gold, and those who have bested him in turn.

In his mind, every opponent has been the toughest he has ever faced. He noted, "All those guys that I faced I want to thank them for pushing me and making me better as a fighter every day. It's hard to say who was the toughest fight or the easiest fight; they are all tough fighters and there will always be younger and hungrier ones waiting in the wings. And I want to feel like them, I want to feel like I don't have any titles behind my back and that I am trying to get the first one. That's my mentality and my philosophy."

While he holds every opponent he's faced with equal regard, the medals and trophies he's won by defeating them hold different meanings to him. When discussing his proudest accomplishments a competitor he noted, "The first title as a black belt is always good, but for me I'd say the sweeter title is the ADCC 2013 gold. I feel this way because I lost in 2009 and then I lost in 2011, and I was thinking, 'Wow, that is the most prestigious title and it's every two years. Worlds is every year but this is every two years, and in that time you're getting older, time has passed by, people are asking you 'why do you keep doing this?', saying 'I think you should stop, you have your school and your students, just focus on teaching.' And I was thinking, 'Wow, it's been 4 years,' and even I, who am a very positive person, was doubting myself.

"Then one day I woke up and was like, 'no, I cannot let people guide my life and say what I can do or what I can't do.' So I went back again and I started training again and it took six years, but I got my first title. And then I said, 'you know what? If I get the first one then I will be able to get the second one as well,' and BOOM I got my second one. So I always say that the first one is the sweeter one. And I always tell my students that you have to overcome the obstacles and not to give up on your dreams. Sometimes saying that is easier than doing it and I want to show them that it's really possible, and instead of trying to be a leader, I will lead."

When discussing the challenges he faced en route to finally capturing his first ADCC title, Cobrinha is quick to point out that when he was filled with doubt he relied on two things to carry him over the hump: his ardent belief in positive thinking and the support of his son and student, Kennedy Leonardo Maciel.

"I feel blessed talking about my son because he was one of the people who motivated me to get back into competition, especially competing at the ADCC – when I had doubt he would say, 'No daddy, whatever you want to do I will help you, and I think you can do it dad,' and he had just started [training jiu jitsu]. I took this as motivation, and said, 'No. I keep telling my son to never give up and do this and do that,' so I decided it's back to the lab again, start training again and show this kid how hard we have to work to succeed in life.

"So he was one of the big inspirations for me to go back and start competing and training again after losing two times in the ADCC finals. Having him as my son, I don't see him as my son, but as one of my best friends. On the mat he doesn't treat me as his daddy and I don't treat him as my son; I treat him as my other students on the mat. But of course he's my son and we are together 24 hours a day, and we discuss everything, and we talk and it's amazing. Like I said, he is my best friend and he has a brilliant future in jiu jitsu."

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Cobrinha has accomplished everything there is to accomplish in sport jiu jitsu. If he were never to fight again he would still be regarded as one of the best competitors of his time, and possibly the best lightweight fighter ever to have stepped on the mats. With nothing left to prove he now competes to lead from the front and set the proper example for his son and other students to follow. His legacy is already firmly cemented in the world of Brazilian jiu jitsu; all that is left now is to grow his legend.

When asked about his future as a competitor his response is frank and candid – he doesn't know what the future holds, but he will continue giving his all on the mats for as long as his mind and body allow him to. He explained, "Sometimes good questions you don't have the answer to. To that question I will say that I don't know. I don't know how long I can keep up with the young fighters, but I do feel like I'm still 20 years old. I'm 36 but I feel like I'm 20 years old, right there with them, just because of the way that I take care of my body, so if I want to compete for another five years I think I will be able to do it."

Cobrinha can rest assured that he will be cheered and admired for his grit and tenacity for as long as he chooses to keep putting it all on the line in jiu jitsu competitions. The man is a true ambassador for our sport and an example to follow on and off the mats. When asked if he had any final thoughts for our readers he told JJS, "Thank you to my fans and people that look up to me. Thank you to my sponsors, especially Storm Kimonos; they are always there with whatever I want to do if I want to compete or if I don't want to compete.

And again, just thank you to my fans. Keep drilling over and over, as much as you can, that's one of my philosophies. I post videos and I want to make sure they are benefiting as much as they can and I really recommend you all to drill as much as you can, to have better control and to keep it playful."

"ONCE YOU OVERCOME THAT MENTAL BLOCKAGE THEN YOU CAN COME TO THE GYM AND TRAIN"

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MATUDA GEZARY

THE BEAUTY OF COMPETITION IS THAT, WIN OR LOSE, IT PROVIDES US WITH A FAIRLY ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OF OUR SKILL LEVEL. AS WE COMPETE MORE CONSISTENTLY, WE DEVELOP A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT PREPARATION IS NECESSARY TO BE SUCCESSFUL. SMART FIGHTERS ARE RESOURCEFUL AND THEY WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN. FOR RICARDO LIBORIO BLACK BELT AND MULTIPLE WORLD CHAMPION, GEZARY MATUDA, THAT COMPETITIVE SPARK AND STRATEGIC APPROACH WAS IGNITED VERY EARLY IN LIFE.

Those of you who have siblings know that the dirtiest and most vicious fights of your life will take place on a bedroom floor or in the back yard. Sometimes the kitchen table is all that protects you from getting stabbed with the plastic fork your sister picked up as she chased you down the stairs and into the kitchen.

Today, Gezary is a student and instructor out of American Top Team in Coconut Creek, Florida. In our recent interview, I was amused to learn that as a teen in Brazil, she began training martial arts more seriously because of her brother. Due to his unfair advantage during sibling tussles, she decided to kick it up a notch and started training Muay Thai with Anderson "The Spider" Silva. The light featherweight may not look intimidating but don't let that fool you; Matuda is crafty and she will not back down.

Matuda described the beginning of her martial arts training. She said, "I started when I was sixteen, seventeen years old… I started training Muay Thai because my brother was training too. I was doing Capoeira and my brother always beat me up. So I decided to train Muay Thai with him and at the time, my teacher was Anderson Silva, before he got famous. I loved it and after a few years training I asked him to get a fight. I wanted to do a professional Muay Thai fight. And he always said, 'No, no, it's too dangerous, you're going to get hurt, you're going to break your nose…'"

After much pestering, The Spider offered a bargain. He said, "OK, I have a jiu jitsu tournament. You fight the jiu jitsu tournament and if you win, then we will talk about it."

Matuda jumped at the chance. She recalled: 'So I'm like, "It's ok, it's gonna be easy…' Now I know he just said that because I didn't like to train jiu jitsu. In the gym, he would always say, 'Put your gi on, go to train, put your gi on.' And I remember I had a huge gi because I didn't have money to buy a gi and it was really uncomfortable. I didn't like it."

Still, Gezary, or "G" for short, was so eager for the chance to compete in Muay Thai that she continued to put the gi on. And, as the story goes for many of us, Gezary's first experience in competition didn't turn out quite as she had imagined. "It was a small tournament. And I was like OK, I'm good, it's fine, get the girl. I thought I was fine. And then this girl kicked my butt. She passed, she mounted, she got the back; she did everything to me. And after that I got so angry! I thought, Oh my God, I need to beat this girl."

The sting of defeat is the catalyst for numerous personal evolutions and following the loss, G was on a mission. She began focusing on jiu jitsu as Muay Thai became less and less important to her. "My focus was to have a rematch with her. I trained for three or four months and I jumped in the tournament and then I finally won! After that I didn't stop training jiu jitsu and I fought with the same girl a bunch of times because in the city there was only me and her in that weight."

Since there were so few people her size to train with, Matuda's training was very difficult, especially during the years leading to her achievement of purple belt. Her will to win is so strong that when she was out-muscled during training, she would become emotional.

Those tears made some of her teammates uncomfortable and at one point, her new instructor suggested that she quit jiu jitsu altogether.

"When I was in Brazil, my teacher gave me a purple belt and then he moved to the other city. So he put somebody else in to replace him. And I remember this guy, one day, he said, 'G, you cry too much.' Because every day I got beat up and I'd cry a lot. I wanted to fight with the guys but they were so much stronger than me. So I cried a lot."

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO COMPETE, YOU SHOULD TRAIN WITH MEN. IF YOU'RE GOING TO COMPETE, YOU NEED TO HAVE YOUR BUTT KICKED"

"And one day he called me over [and] he said, 'Hey, come here, listen, you need to do something else. Jiu jitsu's not for you.' This was my face: (makes depressed face). And I remember I got punched and my lip was all bloody, and he said, 'Try to do something else, you know, you cry too much the guys don't want to train with you anymore.' And then I went home, I stayed home for like one week and then I came back to the gym. This was the time I thought that maybe he was right; maybe I shouldn't do that, maybe I should do something else. But then I met Sebastian and Leticia Lalli, a black belt couple. They invited me to train at their gym. So I found the perfect place! A lot of people my size; light and very technical."

Inexperienced jiu jitsu practitioners are sometimes clumsy and unaware of the power advantage they have over their smaller teammates. They can assume that a blue or purple belt acts as an invincibility cloak, protecting its wearer from injury and infusing him or her with superhuman powers. So to beat a purple belt, even though she is a light featherweight with considerably less testosterone, is a brag-worthy accomplishment. Matuda elaborated, "That always happens. At the gym, sometimes I watch the heavy guys going in hard on the girls just because they're a higher belt. They think they cannot lose to a girl."

Athletes with unrealistic views of jiu jitsu can be hard to deal with, especially when they are also much stronger. At her first gym, it was challenging to find suitable training partners. Gezary continued, "This was the problem where I trained before. Most of the guys were white belts. I'm aggressive too so I had a lot of problems with the heavy guys. The place I went after that was the Equipe 1, Curitiba, and it was perfect because Sebastian separated the fighters by weight. Finally I could train with light and technical guys! Now I don't have this problem anymore because I can choose my partners, but I always like to help other girls on the mat so they don't have the same problems that I had."

Once she found a more appropriate training environment, Matuda became unstoppable. She regularly competes in at least two major tournaments a year, specifically the IBJJF World Championships, for which she currently holds two titles at black belt and the Pan-American Championships, a promotion she also holds multiple titles for. I asked Gezary how she prepares for competition and she explained that once tournament season begins, all of the private lessons and seminars she teaches are significantly reduced. She maintains a rigorous schedule, training multiple times a day with a very structured program. When I pressed for further details, Matuda laid out a typical training camp.

"Before my tournaments, I have a camp. In my off season it's like regular training in the gym, I don't rest. But before all of my big tournaments, I do like six or eight weeks of camp." During a typical training day, Matuda trains multiple times. "Sometimes three times a day. I do drills in the morning. At night I go to another gym: ATT Aventura. It's also American Top Team, but it's close to Miami, like forty-five minutes from me. So I go there to train with Tagarela and the Mahecha brothers. I don't know if you know them... Taga is the head coach there and the Mahecha brothers are twins. Both are black belts and lightweights; small, flexible and technical."

Although some male beginners are tough to train with, their value as training partners as they ascend the ranks is priceless. Gezary was adamant on this point. She explained, "If you're going to compete, you should train with men. If you're going to compete, you need to have your butt kicked. This is why I travel forty-five minutes three times a week. I go to ATT Aventura. I know they're going to kick my butt. And I'll tell you, I still cry (she laughs). Do you remember

I was telling you that my teacher said, 'You cry a lot?' I still cry and my teammates say, 'Come on, G.' They know I cry and they keep pushing me. They don't go easy on me; they don't stop because I cry. And I say, 'Keep going, I'm fine!' (she laughs). "If I need to tap I just tap and start all over again."

Matuda believes that her team is responsible for her level of success. In addition to the butt kicking she gets from the Mahecha brothers, she has several other people guiding her training. Former World Champion and one of the world's most prestigious grappling coaches, Marcos de Matta "Parumpa", Jonatas Gurgel "Tagarela" and her husband, ATT's Muay Thai coach, Katel Kubis, develop game plans so Gezary knows exactly what to focus on during her camp. She explained that when she prepares for events with known opponents, they will exploit their weaknesses as well as focus on Matuda's strengths. With larger tournaments where opponents are unknown, Gezary is much more focused on her own strengths. In both scenarios, there is a plan for the perfect match but alternative plans and strategies are also planned and drilled.

"AT THE GYM, SOMETIMES I WATCH THE HEAVY GUYS GOING IN HARD ON THE GIRLS JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE A HIGHER BELT. THEY THINK THEY CANNOT LOSE TO A GIRL"

Before her matches her husband helps to prepare her mentally, calming her nerves and focusing her attention on her goal. Katel is the calm voice in her corner, confirming her thoughts as she whirls through her techniques, always seeking that submission.

"I always have a second option, maybe a third. Sometimes it's like, 'G, you're going to pull guard.' But she pulls guard first and then I need to change everything right away. And my corner always stays with me so when I need to change the strategies, they change with me. If I try to go to one side and it doesn't work, I think about changing sides and they just confirm."

After months of preparation, on September 12, 2015, Gezary achieved a submission victory via armbar over eight-time black belt World Champion, Michelle Nicolini, at Polaris 2 in only twelve seconds. She expressed her gratitude for the help of her team in her post-fight interview and inspired the rest of us to reach for the stars.

"Yes… I'm proud and this is my coach Parumpa's job. My husband, Katel Kubis' job. All my training partners who believe in me: Jonatas Gurgel of American Top Team Aventura, American Top Team Coconut Creek; they expend just so much… every morning we drill. That's for three months, maybe more. And they do that because they love what they do. I wake up every morning, put my gi on and I chase my dreams."

Now that she has fulfilled many of her dreams, she has followed in the footsteps of her first teacher, Anderson Silva. She coaches the children at American Top Team aged three to six, and six to eleven. The six to eleven year olds also have a competition team, taught by Matuda. She said, "They do everything, berimbolo, de la Riva; they are high level for kids." Her students are devoted and love to watch her matches and see her medals.

When I asked her what she would tell women who are beginning jiu jitsu, after all that she has been through, she suggested, "I like the idea for the women's class, especially for the beginners. It's really good to have a women's class. And this is what I always tell the girls who come to ATT. If there's something bothering you, talk to your teacher. Go there and say, 'Well, I don't feel comfortable with this guy or this guy, if you could please not put me with him anymore.'

"For the girls that are starting, talk to your teacher about your goals and if you're thinking about competing make this clear to your coach. This communication is important and makes everything easier for everyone. Because we're girls, you know. The teachers need to know who to put the girls with. One tip is always put a white belt with a higher belt. As female students become better able to defend themselves, they can merge into co-ed classes and train with more experienced male teammates."

Matuda never did get to defeat that first male opponent, her troublesome brother. But training together certainly decreased the drama at home. She explained, "We beat up each other during the trainings and the fights at home just stopped. It was a relief to my mother and it was one of the best lessons in martial arts. We learnt to respect each other and fight only on the mat. When I was getting better in the fights, he stopped training. Jokes aside, today, I am thankful, for he has helped me to be a fighter!"

Gezary has a bright future ahead of her, with another bout promised at Polaris and a goal of at least one more black belt world title. If we have learned anything about Matuda during this interview, it's that what G believes, G achieves, one way or another!

SCRAMBLE

THE WOLVERINE: EDDIE CUMMINGS

THE BUZZ HAD GROWN STEADILY THROUGHOUT THE AUGUST NIGHT IN LOS ANGELES FOR A MAN EDDIE BRAVO HAD RUN OUT OF SUPERLATIVES FOR. THE 10TH PLANET CHIEF DESCRIBED THE NEW YORKER AS A 'LEG LOCK WIZARD' ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS, INCLUDING DURING AN APPEARANCE ON '*THE JOE ROGAN EXPERIENCE*' THAT REACHED MILLIONS, AND AT EBI 4 – HIS SECOND OUTING UNDER THE BRAVO BANNER – EDDIE 'WOLVERINE' CUMMINGS' PERFORMANCES WERE PROVING HE WAS EQUAL TO BRAVO'S BILLING.

While his teammate Garry Tonon submitted him in the semi-final on route to winning EBI 3's welterweight tournament, Cummings had displayed a skill set that was worthy of the platform. His heel hook finishes of Lauri Karppinen and Enrico Cocco turned a lot of heads at EBI 3, but the event is best remembered for the triumphant efforts of Tonon. EBI 4, however, was all about Cummings.

The John Danaher black belt graduated to the finals of the competition in front of a packed Orpheum Theatre crowd after dispatching all of his opponents - Kevin Berbrich, Russ Miura and Baret Yoshida - with his patented heel hook. UFC fighter Joe Soto awaited him in the final. An experienced grappler, Soto threw caution to the wind in all of his matches, looking as tranquil as can be while competitors like Eddie Fyvie, former EBI featherweight champion Geo Martinez and Joao Miyao looked to tie up a leg lock. Soto's heel hook finish of Fyvie underlined his own competency in that particular field.

Soto cracked jokes with his corner and took the time to wipe sweat away from his brow as Cummings tried to force the fatal sequence of the final contest. Soto shared a joke with the referee, Bravo, and even when Cummings looked dangerously close to latching on to his heel he batted it away as if it was nothing. However, as Soto tried to invert, Cummings picked his moment beautifully to lock up an inside heel hook. The tap came quickly, and with it Cummings announced himself to the world as one of the most dangerous competitors in submission grappling.

"Grappling is grappling and leg locks are no different than any other submission," says Cummings reminiscing on his EBI triumph. "Anyone that goes in there and says 'I can't be triangled', rest assured there is someone that can definitely triangle that person. There is some expert out there that could set it up perfectly and finish it, there's no doubt about that.

"It's the same thing with leg locks, there are no un-leg lockable people. There are certainly people who are challenging, that have good defences, but that's the fight. There is a system going on; it's about winning the fight in small places, advancing position and then getting to the finish. It's scientific.

"Joe was a great competitor, he was joking around and talking some trash, he was trying to make me calm so he could catch me. All is fair in love and war, right? I've had opponents talk to me before so I was kind of ready for that. We do it a lot in training too, we go hard and we'll talk crap to each other all day. Garry is the king of that," he quips.

The leg lock expert has had a meteoric year with his gold display at the ADCC trials, his success in EBI, his heel hook victory over Sambo Master, Reilly Bodycomb, at Polaris PRO and his quarter final ADCC finish in Sao Paulo. At EBI 4, the world saw his composure and intent in the bout with Soto, but despite his calm demeanour, Cummings highlighted that there are some growing pains when transitioning to the higher echelons of the sport.

"I don't think I was completely prepared for stepping up to black belt competition," explains Cummings, who received his promotion from John Danaher earlier this year. "There are definitely some guys that can compete against anyone in the world and not care, but I certainly wasn't that person. There is a transitional stage where you go from worshipping a guy like Cobrinha, to analysing his game and trying to pick him apart. You've got to be real and start looking at these guys like fellow competitors. Now, I think I'm well on my way through that transition, especially after ADCC and competing in some of these big events."

It is hard to believe that Cummings once felt the same level of terror as a lot of grapplers when it comes to leg locks. Known as some of the most devastating techniques available to submission fighters, Cummings admits that he too was tentative about leg attacks. Preparing for a NAGA event that allowed the techniques in his white belt division, Cummings knew he had to learn and learn quickly.

"I was like, 'Man, everybody is going to heel hook me, I don't know what I'm doing!' My first instructor Krishna Mirjah from a team called Tech-Cell; he was known as a bit of a leg-locker but he was fairly conservative when it came to demonstrating the techniques to white belts. You know, he wouldn't have us training heel hooks and stuff like that.

"I can remember he went through the various sequences with me for hours on end, and he demonstrated quite a bit of patience in doing so. I wanted to know how to do the techniques and I wanted to know how to defend them. I would just go for cross Achilles all the time on my training partners

after that. That was the beginning of my fascination, it all came from having to deal with leg locks in a very visceral way and I was very scared of them," he laughs.

Later, Cummings moved to Renzo Gracie's academy to study under the tutelage of one of the most respected coaches in the game, John Danaher. Historically, leg locks were not appreciated when jiu jitsu began to gain momentum internationally. However, Danaher's 'pragmatic' approach to the martial art gave him an eye-opening experience when Dean Lister paid a visit to the New York gym in the early 2000s, according to the EBI featherweight champion.

"The story John told me about him noting the efficacy of leg locks came about when Dean Lister visited Renzo Gracie's gym a very long time ago. This was in the early 2000s when Dean was at the height of his power. He had just ran through ADCC and apparently he showed up to Renzo's and just destroyed everybody with leg locks. I was told that at the time only (Matt) Serra could hang with him, not in terms of leg locks but in term of overall grappling.

"It was that visit that made John take a serious look at leg locks; it was a defining moment in regards to his fascination with those techniques. I actually spoke to Dean about it too, I hung out with him after a seminar he did last year. I told him the story and he said, 'Yeah, I used to go down there a bit', as only he can, but that's where John has told me that his fascination began. We know now that leg locks are 100 percent functional, and that's why he has continued to study them."

Despite being a year and a half into his undergraduate work with physics, Cummings decided to go full time with his grappling after his black belt promotion this year. The two fields might seem very different, but Cummings said there is somewhat of a crossover between the two.

"I TRULY BELIEVE THAT IF YOU'RE ABLE TO CONTROL, ADVANCE POSITION AND THEN SUBMIT A GRAPPLER, THAT'S THE ULTIMATE FORM OF VICTORY"

"The experience of academic rigour makes it easier in terms of memorising movement patterns and memorising long trains of thought and ideas that are relevant for grappling. I think my time studying physics also inspires a certain scientific approach to things, and that kind of approach is very rewarding in grappling. You know, like not taking someone at face value just because they 'do an armbar like this', it's better to find out for yourself if that armbar works.

"You've got to be willing to throw out your best techniques if you find that they are not as efficient or strong as you thought they were. I think that's something that definitely carried over and has helped. John is like that as well, we get on for that reason, we both have an undying need to pragmatically approach the sport."

An interesting side-note to all of the American's success is the fact that he has never competed in an IBJJF event. One of the best leg lock proponents in the world, Cummings found the rule set far too restrictive on his ascent, as only brown belts can perform some leg lock techniques under IBJJF rules.

"I have competed in smaller competitions that use the same rules, but the rules have just never really appealed to me. When I started to compete I just felt that the IBJJF rules were too restrictive and the fact [that] their events are quite expensive didn't help. The events aren't very local either and by the time they started coming around I had already developed my leg lock game. At the time I wasn't a full-time competitor so the logistical costs on top of it not being a rule set that I prefer kind of turned me off.

"At this point I much prefer the submission only events. The EBI-style tournaments, the ADCC – these events pay as well. IBJJF just started doing pro events but before that it was a lot of out-of-pocket expenses and there wasn't always necessarily a financial reward for the winner. As a starving student and a grappler, I had to make decisions based on that too."

While a gold medal at the Mundials was the goal every jiu jitsu player strived for a couple of years ago, there are many more options available to athletes nowadays. Cummings believes that the IBJJF rule set differs so greatly from that of the submission only events, that in the future the pursuits will be viewed as completely different sports.

"I hope the landscape is changing. I don't think people will ever stop having the dream of winning the Mundials, but I do think that we will eventually see jiu jitsu as we know it broken into two different sports that will be similar, but not the same. In the future people will talk about being a jiu jitsu world champion and a submission grappling champion and eventually those will be considered two different things as we continue to progress.

"Sometimes when you're in the sport it's hard to see what the overall trend is, but I think the two different rule sets we see nowadays, say IBJJF as opposed to EBI, they encourage different styles of grappling. We're going to see these arts become more and more separate to the point where people will recognise them as different pursuits altogether. Being a submission grappling champion will be recognised in the same way that a Sambo champion or a judo champion is. It's a different sport and it's nice to be able to earn a living under this certain rule set. It's where the money is, it's where the fans are and the fact that you can earn a living is critical."

The finality of submission only events seems to appeal to the fans a lot more than the traditional format, which can often result in matches being decided by advantages or referees' decisions. As far as Cummings is concerned, submission is always king in terms of both a competition and spectacle that appeals to athletes and fans alike.

"GRAPPLING IS GRAPPLING AND LEG LOCKS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER SUBMISSION"

"As a competitor, I both fear and love the finality of the submission: the winner, and the loser. With a sub only, no time limit match, somebody is walking out of there submitted. It's a more exciting format to watch provided that both competitors are actually trying to submit each other. I think the idea of winning by an advantage or winning by two points because you managed to sweep a person has less of a victorious feel to it.

"I truly believe that if you're able to control, advance position and then submit a grappler, that's the ultimate form of victory. You know how guys talk at points tournaments – 'Ah, he beat me on points' – and I think we all have that same understanding, submissions are still king. We can get beat up, but we don't want to be submitted, that's something we all try to avoid.

"At IBJJF competitions it's mostly just guys who do jiu jitsu who are actually competing that day that are filling the stands. At events like EBI, it's the other way around, most of the people are fans. Sure, they train, but they are there to watch these matches. If you've ever gone to an IBJJF event where it's the black belt only divisions, the IBJJF pro and things like that, they're dead.

"I think that's telling in terms of what is preferable to watch, but also the production value to some of these pay-per-view events is amazing. EBI and Polaris, these are real events. It's an experience just going there and feeling the energy. It's exciting, that's a huge factor.

"There's a story being told at these submission only events. As I said, sometimes separating the fans and competitors can be an issue, but even I get excited about these events. Really, sometimes I wish I wasn't competing so I would be able to just enjoy it as a fan.

"Eddie Bravo's reasoning behind doing a tournament format was that people would be able to see the eventual finalists compete multiple times before they reach the final. The fans get an opportunity to get familiar with the athletes and their styles. Look at EBI 4; people might not have known who someone like Joe Soto was, but by the end they knew a lot about him.

He did great and that built excitement organically on the night. I don't think anybody was talking about Eddie Cummings and Joe Soto being in the finals, but by the end of the night people were pumped for it and so was I."

As for Cummings' career going forward, he has no doubts that he is learning and training with the right people at Renzo Gracie's academy.

"I feel secure in terms of who I train with and the development of my game. Even becoming a professional grappler and having this instructor and having these training partners in such a fantastic environment, I feel like this is a perfect environment to study this art. I'm very grateful that there is such coherence in my life. My whole day is based around this sport and everyone is encouraging that. I've got all these great minds around me, all these great training partners, I'm very fortunate."

When considering his goals for the future, Cummings only focuses on what he knows he can improve rather than plotting to win certain tournaments. It is the small improvements in skill set and technique that eventually lead to the successes at competition level, according to Cummings.

"I try to stop myself from saying things like, 'I want to win ADCC in two years' because there is a lot that can happen that can influence that. You don't know what your draw is going to be like, you could get unlucky, you could be on the wrong end of a bad call. There is a lot out of your control with that goal.

"I prefer to set goals that are more short term, like 'I want to get better at rolling kimura attacks from top.' I'll set up a schedule that will allow me to get some reps of that, I'll think about it when I'm grip fighting and I'll focus on it during a certain percentage of my rolls for that day. That, I can control.

"I want to keep competing as much as possible; obviously EBI is on my mind in December, I've already started to train for that. I'm working my back control and armbar stuff already, I want to get really good at that so that's what's on my plate right now. I want to compete at the highest level, I want to win ADCC, but I try not to set that as my focus goal. I want to focus on long-term goals with my skill development and the victories will follow from developing better skills.

"The whole trick to staying ahead of the opposition, particularly with our approach to the leg game, is realising that it is a system. It's not a stage trick. We're not catching legs and getting lucky, if someone does one thing they are not going to be able to shut it down. There is a system, a strategic approach, which is why I'll still be able to leg lock people even if they know the exact entrance I'm going to use, even if they know the exact finish I'm going to use.

"That's how we designed the system. It's based around positional controls that are difficult to deal with. All of jiu jitsu is based on the same thing. We pass guard, we get side control, we transition to mount – these are all control positions. The game plan has been there from the start and it's still there today. Even though people know someone is trying to pass their guard it still happens, it's the system. There is a way of setting up, we have these small battles that can be won or lost.

"The leg game is just like that and people are understanding that much more, which is why they like it. They appreciate that these are systematic positional controls. As long as you exercise your game systematically and keep trying to develop it through the system, you'll be fine. It's when you start relying on tricks that you get yourself in trouble. I'll continue to develop my game, I'm working on a lot of different submissions, and hopefully you guys will see some of them soon."

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IBJJF European Champion 2013
NAGA European Champion 2012
Dickie Martin (Black Leve)
Masters World Champion 2014
Heavyweight and Openweight
Sam Gibson (Blue Leve)
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THE RISE OF BJJ IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

Several months ago, I was asked by Kev Capel of Roger Gracie Academy Buckinghamshire whether I would be interested in teaching a seminar for the RAF on one of their bases. Obviously I jumped at the opportunity to do something different and exciting with new people in a less-than-traditional location. Whilst the day itself was a great success, what was particularly interesting was that in the days prior to the seminar and on the day itself, I began to understand the growth of jiu jitsu within the British Armed Forces in general, and the RAF specifically. Much of the information below comes from Sergeant Stewart "Paddy" Bonner, who has spearheaded the development of jiu jitsu in the RAF and whose help on this article has been invaluable.

Jiu jitsu practitioners can be found in all walks of life, and it is a passion that is exceptionally effective at bringing people together to exchange knowledge, or simply to roll. The RAF is no different, and there have been members training jiu jitsu for many years, albeit in an unofficial capacity. Stewart Bonner was one of these - a blue belt with several years of MMA under his belt, whose experience gave him the role of instructor for many of the sessions around this time. He wasn't willing to settle for unofficial status though, and set about pushing the sport forwards within the service as quickly as possible.

The first requirement to becoming a recognised martial art within the RAF is to prove that there is a sustainable and long term interest in the art, since so many activities come and go and it would not be worthwhile to lend support to something that is only going to burn out in a matter of a few years. This means not only would there have to be active practitioners but also regular competitions and continued interest year on year. The second requirement is that there has to be a National Governing Body and a recognised set of rules and regulations to fall under. At the time there was no recognised NGB for jiu jitsu, so the route of introducing MMA was chosen instead. There were several different governing bodies and the rules and regulations across all of them were not exactly standardised, but it was at least a starting point.

"ALTHOUGH FULL RECOGNISED STATUS HAD NOT YET BEEN GRANTED IN THE RAF, THE DECISION WAS MADE TO INCLUDE BJJ IN THE INTER SERVICES CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR THE FIRST TIME "

The first MMA Light (as it was called) event was held in 2011 at the RAF Martial Arts Association Championships. The rules were a mixture of semi-contact striking with takedowns and grappling allowed. To begin with there were only two weight classes, -74kg and +74kg, but that didn't stop people jumping at the chance to be involved at the beginning of a sport like this and also to snatch a coveted title.

The next big step was when the RAF gave approval for jiu jitsu practitioners within the RAF to start bringing in external instructors to help guide the students and assist with raising their level as, despite all of the enthusiasm, a higher belt was going to be required to take things to the next level. One of the team members was training at an academy in Aylesbury under Kev Capel, himself an Army veteran, and recommended him for the role. After some discussion, Kev agreed to the position of head instructor to the RAF, and began making monthly journeys to a local base to teach group sessions.

One of the downsides of life in the RAF is that stability in training is hard to come by in the long term, with postings often disrupting whatever arrangements might be in place. Taking that into account, Kev began to move towards setting up a syllabus and a network of training locations throughout the Air Force, which would mean that in any given session and location the same things would be worked on and if you were to move to a new location you would be able to pick up effectively from where you left off. The goal of this process was to create a system that would last for many years to come, ensuring practitioners within the RAF would be free to have their training recognised and supported. As a result, the decision was made to call the club of all RAF practitioners 'Legado' - the Portuguese translation of 'Legacy'.

Whilst all this was going on, the UKBJJA had also been working extremely hard to develop and formalise its status as a recognised National Governing Body and with this ingredient and Kev's role as an overseer, everything was in place to move on to having the sport recognised and approved by the RAF.

It should be noted that whilst all this was happening within the RAF, similar movements were being made in the other services, with jiu jitsu instructors all across the country lending their time for training sessions and overseeing the development of the art across the entire armed forces. Although full recognised status had not yet been granted, the decision was made to include BJJ in the Inter Services Championships for the first time - with entrants from all the services competing not only for themselves but on behalf of their service as a whole.

The event was a huge success, combining competitive drive with the camaraderie that comes from having a shared passion for a sport. "Paddy" Donner himself took the inter services title in his division, a second reward on a day where he got to see his hard work come to fruition and to take to the mats in competition alongside his RAF teammates for the first time. As a continuing sign of the growth within the RAF, numbers had now reached the point where there were more registered practitioners of BJJ within the RAF than all other martial arts combined.

Finally, on September 9th, the Combined Services Sports Board met to vote on granting jiu jitsu the status of a fully recognised sport across all the services, and the vote was unanimously in its favour. With this decision, jiu jitsu practitioners within the Services in the UK would be able to claim assistance with travelling to sessions as well as being granted a budget for any required gear and equipment. This is the same level of recognition that traditional sports such as football and boxing enjoy, which is an incredible achievement in such a short space of time, and will only help to advance the growth of the art in the future.

Now that I have experienced teaching the men and women of the RAF and seen the enthusiasm and skills already on display, I can only look forward to seeing how much progress they will have made by the next time I get the opportunity to work with them!

Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

BUDO JAKE

SELF-DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BJJ

IN TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS CIRCLES, IT'S COMMON TO HEAR THE PHRASE "SELF-DEVELOPMENT" THROWN AROUND WHEN TALKING ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING. IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT I HEAR BJJ ATHLETES TALK SPECIFICALLY ABOUT SELF-DEVELOPMENT BUT I'M SURE IT EXISTS. SO FIRST OF ALL, WHAT DOES SELF-DEVELOPMENT EVEN MEAN?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines self-development as:

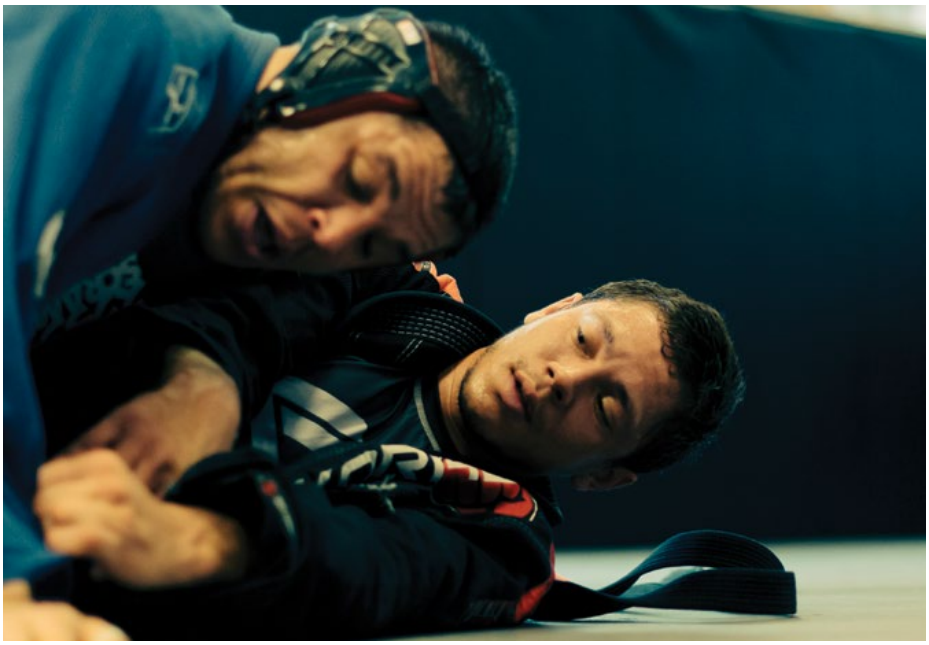
"The act of deciding for yourself how to improve your skills and taking action to do this."

If we look at this from the physical skill level, I don't think there is any question that through training in Brazilian jiu jitsu we are improving our (physical) skills.

When most talk about self-development however, I find undertones relating to improving one's personality or outlook on life. There is this idea that somehow by practising a physical activity, we can become better, happier, members of society.

If we look back through history, martial arts were originally ways of developing fighters. Whether with weapons or empty handed, it was necessary for young men to learn how to fight in order to wage wars, defend territory and so on.

In the early 20th century however, things started to change in Japan. Arts that previously were taught only as a means of fighting started to emphasise their philosophical side.



This was not just a subtle shift. Starting in 1919, arts that had names that ending in "jutsu" (jujutsu, kenjutsu, kyujutsu, etc.) were re-named with "do" at the end. While "jutsu" just means techniques, "do" means "way" as in a "way of life". So jujutsu became judo, kenjutsu became kendo, and so on.

The attitude of many martial arts groups at this time was that "the goals of budo (martial arts) are not to compete for victory in competitions" but that self-development was the real goal. There was a divide between sport and budo. While sports were seen as hobbies, as entertainment, budo was seen as a way to "temper the body and the mind".

When Mitsuyo Maeda taught grappling in Brazil, he chose to use the original name "jujutsu" (or, as it was Romanised, "jiu-jitsu") instead of calling it "judo. Being involved in many challenge matches, I can understand why Maeda was reluctant to use the name judo. Only those that were there would know, but I suspect Maeda much preferred focusing on developing fighters rather than teaching self-development.

But just because our art doesn't have "way of life" in the name, does that mean that athletes' lives aren't being improved because of the training? Are we really only learning how to fight?

I suspect it depends. For some, they train because they want a career in fighting. They are not paying a coach to teach them morals and life lessons. They simply want to know the most efficient ways to knock out or submit their opponent.

There may be other students who, much like myself, have found much value in learning the philosophical lessons that the warriors of old were able to pass on. Children in particular need a lot of guidance and some of that can definitely be found in some of the better BJJ academies around the world.

I suppose that a lot depends on the teacher as well. Not all teachers are qualified or interested in guiding students to look at the deeper aspects of life. At the end of the day, the instructor will focus on what he wants to pass on and if the students like it they will stay.

However, I dare to say that if you aren't learning about yourself through your hard training you just aren't being open to it. It amazes me how much we can learn about our personalities while dealing with hardship and yes; a forearm across the throat qualifies as a hardship!

BEING IN A BAD POSITION

At some point you're going to be smashed. Maybe your opponent is twice your size and he has you in a tight side control position with his shoulder pressuring your jaw. How do you feel in this situation? Of course no one is happy to be there, but the reactions I see vary widely. Some will thrash about in a panic, trying to relieve the pressure. Others will wait calmly until there is an opening to escape.

Finally, some will be overcome by the stress and pressure and may even tap from the position.

GETTING TAPPED

Everyone taps. How do you react when it happens to you? Some will slam their fist on the mat, curse, and continue the roll, looking for revenge. Others will smile and continue, trying not to commit the same mistake again. Finally, others will mentally berate themselves for making the mistake and will ponder their worthiness all night long.

GETTING INJURED

Train long enough and a somewhat serious injury is bound to happen sooner or later. What we practise is a combat sport and if we are training with a reasonable level of intensity, well, ***t happens. Again, the reactions after an injury vary greatly. Some may get depressed. After all, if the injury is serious it's going to put you out of training for a while, and that is depressing. Some students may not even resume their training, claiming that it's "too risky". Others may laugh off the injury and take that time to reflect, read books, and focus on rehab. Injuries happen to all of us, it's how you react that matters.

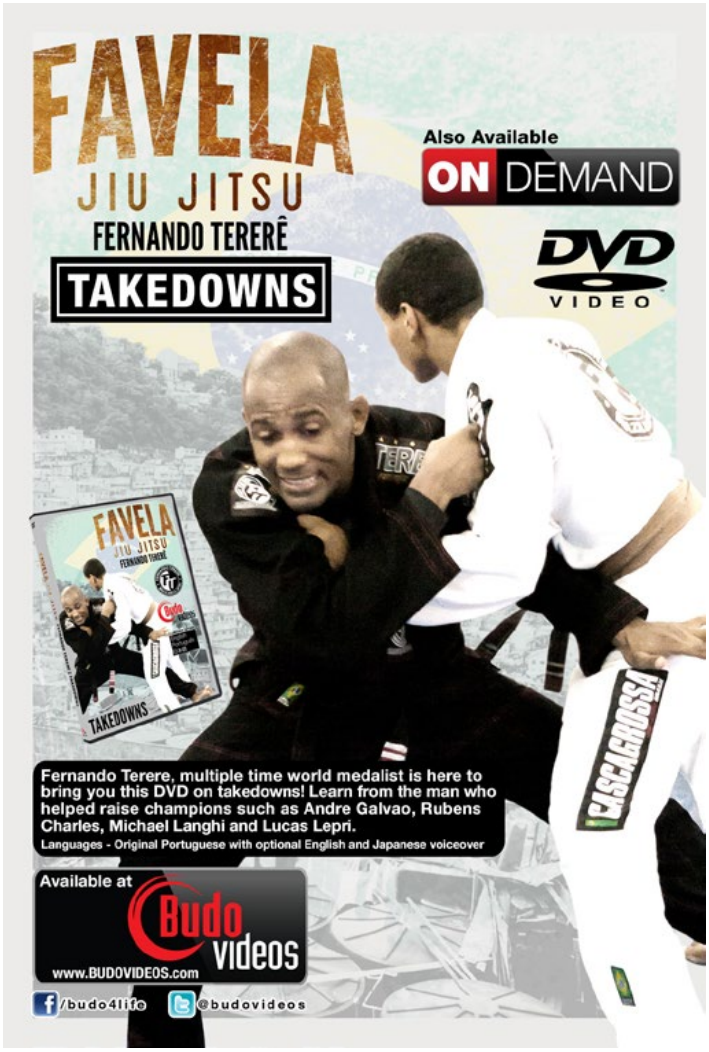
GETTING OVERLOOKED

I've heard it a million times. "I can't believe that guy got promoted. I've been training longer than him! He doesn't deserve it." It's easy to feel envious of our training partners when they get promoted before us. In times like these maybe we can reflect on Carlos Gracie Snr's words "*Be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are of your own.*"

In case it's not clear by now, I definitely think we can take the lessons that we learn on the mat and use them in our daily lives. I don't think instructors necessarily need to force these lessons onto their students. The athletes who are self-aware will learn the lessons. They will become more humble through their beatings on the mat. They will become more respectful as they realise they don't have all the answers.

Injuries can be looked at as setbacks. Setbacks will occur multiple times in life, whether it's a failed relationship, or a financial problem. Maybe our lessons learned from dealing with setbacks on the mat can allow us to handle these tough times better than the non-practitioner.

BJJ training is good for our minds, bodies, and spirit. The lessons we need will come, just as long as we don't quit.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MAKING AN ACADEMY A HOME

WHEN WE START TRAINING JIU JITSU WE ARE OFTEN OVERCOME BY HOW INCREDIBLE IT IS. WE MARVEL AT HOW MUCH POWER WE TRULY HAVE WHEN WE EXERCISE THE CORRECT LEVERAGE, AND SOAK UP EVERY DETAIL AS THE INSTRUCTOR GOES OVER NEW TECHNIQUES. WHILE SOME OF THAT ENTHUSIASM STAYS WITH US, OVER TIME, THE GRIND OF TRAINING STARTS TO TAKE ITS TOLL ON OUR MINDS AND BODIES. WHEN VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT, OUR MAT TIME BECOMES A POWERFUL FORCE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. LET US TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE WAYS BJJ HELPS US TO BETTER OURSELVES.

Whether it is injury, general soreness or just slower progression than we are used to from other endeavours, BJJ begins to feel like hard work. When that starts to happen, one of the key factors in determining our longevity in the sport is our training environment. By treating your academy as more than just a place where you train, you are increasingly likely to ride out the roller coaster ride that BJJ can feel like and to reap all the rewards that it has to offer. Taking the time to make where we train more than just a place to learn techniques is therefore an investment in reaching our long-term BJJ goals. That said, here are some tips we can apply to make our academies into homes that support and encourage us to stay the course in our BJJ journeys.

GET TO KNOW WHITE BELTS

When we start BJJ our imaginations are stimulated by new positions and we are inspired by the BJJ athletes in our academies and those we find on YouTube. As white belts, the BJJ world seems so large, shiny and new. As time goes on and we move up the belt ranks, some of that "newness" wears off as we discover that there are not any shortcuts to real BJJ proficiency. We come to understand that the day-in day-out training we do is more of a reality than the highlights we were so amazed by as newbies. There is nothing wrong with that understanding, but there is something to be said for retaining some of the wide-eyed view of BJJ that excited us in the beginning.

A very effective way to do this is to continuously develop relationships with white belts in our home academies. When we do this we set ourselves up to be constantly reminded of the natural excitement and enthusiasm that we all felt when we were relatively new to the sport. Friendships with white belts are just as beneficial when we are still white belts ourselves; these friendships support our own feelings as we have people with whom to share our new experiences. These types of relationships provide a steady stream of fuel for our own development, but also for our home academies, as they are the source of these positive relationships.

GET TO KNOW SENIOR BELTS

Developing a relationship with at least one senior belt also provides many benefits. From the time I was a white belt until I got my black belt in 2007, senior belts had a tremendous impact on my BJJ journey. Sometimes it was a piece of advice on a technique after class, or a tip on something I was dealing with on the mat that they had encountered. Many times it was simply taking notice of me, or something I did in practice, as I looked up to them as senior belts on the team and that made my day. When I spent a year in Florida as a brown belt, one of the key factors in my enjoyment of my time there was the relationship I developed with Pablo Popovitch while training under him. Even as a brown belt, I benefitted greatly not only from his coaching and vast experience as a competitor but also his perspective on the BJJ lifestyle overall.

Senior belts at our academies are a fantastic resource and should be fully taken advantage of, as they have solved many of the problems that we find ourselves experiencing as we make our own way. There is a popular saying, "A smart person learns from their own mistakes while a wise person learns from the mistakes of others." When we apply this in BJJ by "learning" from senior belts and sharing with thethey have helped us, we not only make our pathway of learning smoother but we enrich their experience as well. This creates a rich team dynamic, built on sharing and

"TRAINING BJJ IS A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT. JUST LIKE ANY LONG RACE, THERE WILL BE TIMES WHEN WE NEED A BOOST IF WE ARE TO KEEP GOING"

support of each other, which helps to make an academy a true team.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Coming together to give to the community brings people together. As a BJJ academy, there are many ways to contribute: free self-defence seminars, anti-bullying campaigns, donations to local shelters, etc. When we get together to pool resources to help others, we allow people to see that BJJ is about more than a workout. It gives people a glimpse into how BJJ can impact lives by inspiring us to think outside of ourselves. What it also does is empower the academy as a force for good in the local area. That kind of energy has a way of building momentum and generating further philanthropic ideas and projects. These are not only worthwhile in and of themselves but have the added benefit of strengthening the bonds that tie the team together.

USE COMPETITIONS

Competitions can be a great help in bringing people from an academy together. As competitors we step onto the mat alone, but the sense of community that we feel from training partners coming to support us is palpable. Win or lose, we know we are not alone as we represent a team that has supported us in the process of preparation and as we actually compete. Training partners and supporters from the academy share the same sense of community that the competing athlete feels. Regardless of where we participate in this process, it inspires a greater sense of belonging and ties us to the team/academy more deeply.

Examples of this type of bonding can be found at regional level tournaments, as well as the Mundials. I remember going to NAGA tournaments in the mid 2000s and looking forward to witnessing our best from the Yamasaki Team competing against teams like Renzo Gracie, Maxercise, Gustavo Machado and Team Lloyd Irvin. One of the highlights of the Mundials every year is watching teams like Alliance, Atos and Gracie Barra battle it out for "team" bragging rights and honours. Competition clearly provides fertile ground for bringing teammates closer together emotionally and helping them more easily feel a sense of belonging to their specific team. When we participate in this in any way, we increase our sense of belonging to the group.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

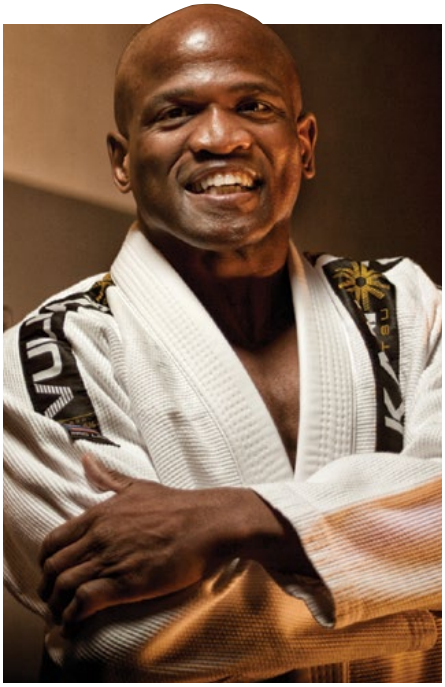
Providing feedback is not about "telling an instructor what to teach" or "coaching during class". It is more about being willing to share your feelings and contributing in areas of expertise. In our academy, we do "weekly themes" where we cover a position or concept and approach it from different angles for that week. For example, we have berimbolo week, de la Riva week, tight-passing week, etc. Since we have implemented that, the overwhelming feedback has been positive. It has helped many of the students to process techniques and ideas more easily, while giving classes a natural flow.

The great thing about this is that it came from a series of conversations I had with a few of the students (one brown belt, one blue belt and two white belts). Their willingness to give me feedback and to share their ideas helped me to help them (and others) by adjusting my teaching pattern. Additionally, the fact that our environment welcomed open and honest dialogue reinforced their sense of belonging, making the school feel like a home to them. One student, being a technology professional, even came back with the idea to completely re-do our school website. He took on this labour of love specifically because of his love for the academy and his feeling that it was his BJJ home. When we contribute our feedback and expertise to our academy, it becomes part of us as we are pouring some of ourselves into it.

Again, training BJJ is a marathon not a sprint. And just like any long race, there will be times when we need a boost if we are to keep going. When we take the time to make real BJJ homes for ourselves, we are proactively helping ourselves stay the course so that we can finish the race.

See you on the mat!

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.



LIVING THE JIU JITSU DREAM

A friend of mine has just landed a fantastic new job. He hates it. The reason: the new responsibilities are affecting his jiu jitsu training. It is a common theme of complaint heard in academy changing rooms across the land - the 'time-money trap': the trading of precious time in return for money, wages or commissions.

Arguably, students of jiu jitsu are some of the most passionate exponents of their sport and if they could do it twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, they more than likely would. While most have resigned themselves to the shackles of the time-money trap, others have refused such a fate and instead chosen to make jiu jitsu their whole lives. For these rare few, they are literally 'living the dream'.

TRIAGE TO TRIANGLES

Dr Marc Barton has been involved in emergency medicine for over fourteen years; he is also a brown belt under Nic Gregoriades and his Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood. Whilst an admirer of the concept of the National Health Service, as a front line doctor he has witnessed and suffered the erosion that the institution has succumbed to over recent years. Increasingly long hours, red tape and unrealistic performance targets have done little to help motivate him to continue into the future. There's also another reason; his love of jiu jitsu.

"I've always done martial arts," says Dr Marc, "even when I was a doctor, I was more interested in martial arts than in medicine, deep in my soul. I wanted to live that lifestyle, I was jealous of the guys who were managing to make martial arts their life and living and I was sick of just having to fit in training here and there, between my long hours of medical work."

With three young children and a lifestyle that had previously been supported by the income level that only an experienced doctor can demand, the decision to make a living from training and teaching jiu jitsu was a brave one indeed.

"What made me move from a moderately well paid job to losing money teaching?" He laughs, "Good question!" But it was a decision he took nevertheless. Marc opened a 'pop-up' branch of the Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood in Kingston upon Thames. Renting a sports hall from a local school, initially the intention was to use it for extra training with his jiu jitsu friends. As providence waved her hand though, momentum and word of mouth grew until attendance numbers suggested that a 'class' was being born.

Starting from classes with just Marc in attendance and having to fund the hall fees from his own pocket, Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood has evolved a burgeoning children's programme, an adult programme that trains four times a week, beginners courses with demand so high that names fill a waiting list and a competition team that, although not filled with world champions, is filled with competitors who love what they do.

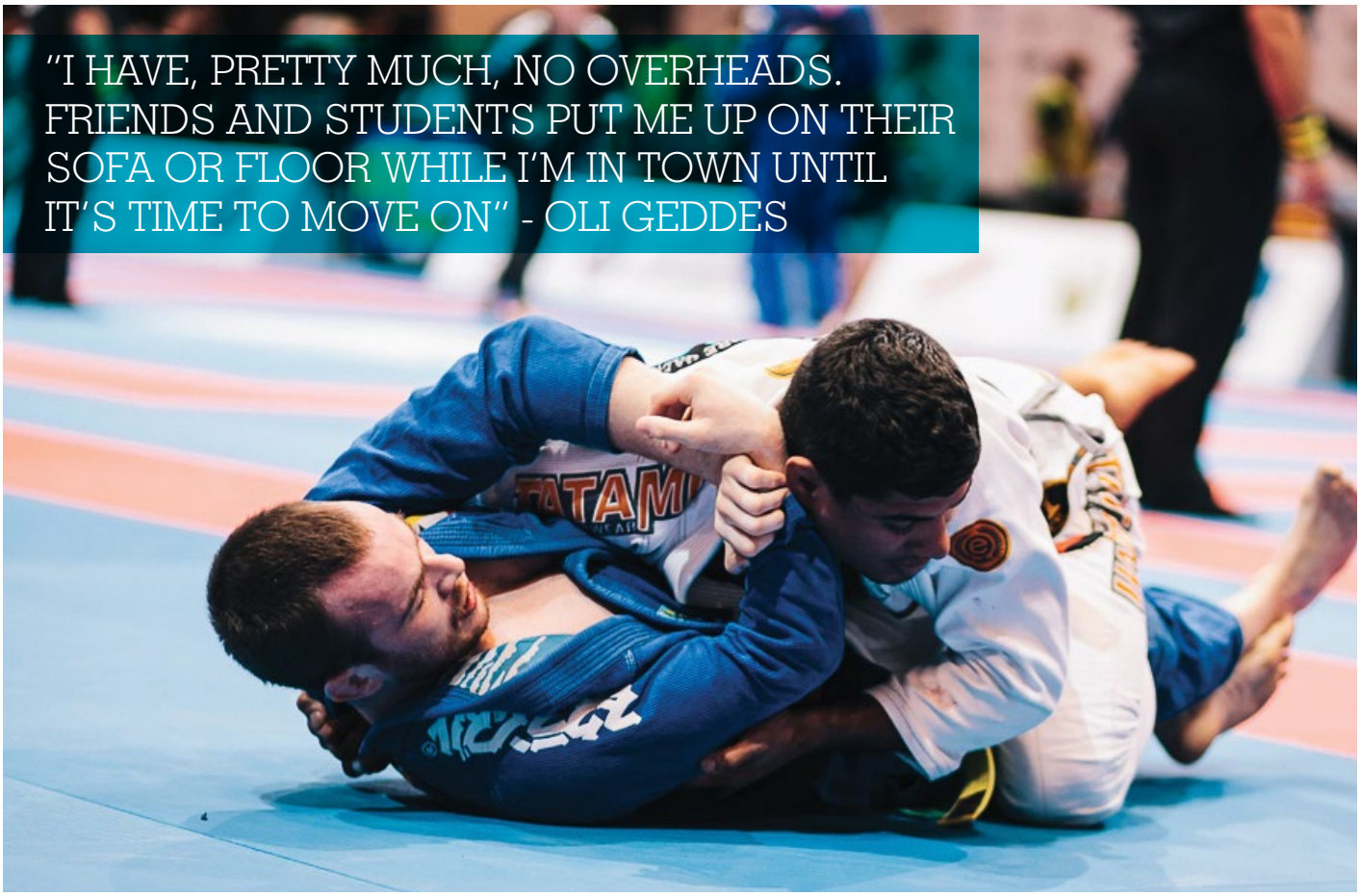
Whilst Dr Marc still has some way to go before he and his pop-up jiu jitsu club can fully become his primary income - an online medical exam resource helps make up the difference in the meantime - it is well on its way and, what's more, he is an example of someone daring to live the dream.

AN AUSSSIE, A POLE AND A JIU JITSU GUY WALKED INTO A ROOM...

Although sounding like the start of something hilarious, when three men with the shared goal of 'living the dream' teamed up, they were not joking.

Friends since childhood, Jacek Toczydlowski and Tomasz Rydzewski grew up in Poland learning martial arts at the same academy. The seeds of 'living the dream' were set early on when Tomasz was still a blue belt (now a black belt under Roger Gracie) and Jacek had just embarked on a career in professional MMA.

"We loved training, we loved the people and the camaraderie but we just didn't like how the academy was run," says Tomasz of their previous experience in Poland, "and we thought {Jack and I} how awesome it would be to one day have our own academy- an academy that was run properly."


"I HAVE, PRETTY MUCH, NO OVERHEADS. FRIENDS AND STUDENTS PUT ME UP ON THEIR SOFA OR FLOOR WHILE I'M IN TOWN UNTIL IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON" - OLI GEDDES

Although endowed with plenty of both brawn and brains (Jacek a ferocious striker and Tomasz a graduate in computer science and mathematics), if they were to live their dream from within the walls of an actual bricks and mortar academy, they would need a good dose of business nous as well as money.

Enter Australian business specialist, Trent Scanlen. As a consultant to corporate giants, Scanlen has travelled to the far corners of the globe. "Wherever I've travelled, both for work and independently, I've always wanted to work out" Trent explains. "I'd go to a weights gym, a jiu jitsu academy or a striking class just to stay in shape."

Having visited such academies as Renzo Gracie's in New York, Tri Star in Montreal, and both Randy Couture's and Wanderlei Silva's gyms in Las Vegas, Scanlen, with his keen eye for business, absorbed the best from each whilst working on what he would improve if the academy was his own. As a student of both Tomasz and Jacek, he was aware of their talents and desire to open an academy and it would not be long before all three would commit to a partnership that would make the dream a reality.

In August 2015, Richmond Fitness Club opened its doors for business. With a comprehensive programme of martial arts and fitness for all ages and standards, it is a concrete example of the heights that can be reached by daring to reach for them.

THE 'MATSURFER'

Our last example is the epitome of the 'living the dream' concept. He is none other than *Jiu Jitsu Style*'s very own Oli Geddes.

After university (another computer scientist!) Oli decided upon a gap year. Accustomed to the frugal life of a student, it wasn't hard for him to live with just his basic needs met whilst the rest of his time could be dedicated to training, competing and teaching.

"I just thought I'd try it and see how it went," he told me in a Surrey coffee shop before jetting off to the US to compete and referee at the IBJJF World Masters. Ten years on, he is still living the dream. A combination of sponsorship, seminars, private lessons, writing fees, refereeing, prize money and appearance fees have been added to his means of 'meeting his needs' as his life on the road has matured.

"I have, pretty much, no overheads," he explains. "Friends and students put me up on their sofa or floor while I'm in town until it's time to move on." This style of living is shared by his friend Christian Graugart (The BJJ Globetrotter) who has even started an online "couch-surfing style service that matches BJJ travellers and hosts from around the world" in order to help others trying to live the life he and Oli are enjoying.

"ARGUABLY, STUDENTS OF JIU JITSU ARE SOME OF THE MOST PASSIONATE EXPONENTS OF THEIR SPORT AND IF THEY COULD DO IT TWENTY FOUR HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, THEY MORE THAN LIKELY WOULD"

Geddes clearly loves what he does. Living a nomadic jiu jitsu lifestyle, he is as close to living off-grid as you can get and it shows in his easy manner, his passionate teaching style and his high level of jiu jitsu. When asked how long he planned to keep living this way he said, "I'm happy doing what I'm doing. If someone offered me a good basic wage - nothing fancy - with accommodation thrown in, then I may sit tight and settle."

I heard him say it. And I don't believe a word of it. Who in their right mind would give up living the dream?

HOW TO LIVE THE DREAM

I couldn't let these brave hearts get away without first giving us their advice for living the life of our dreams. Here it is, so that if you desire, you may do the same:

JUST DO IT!

For all its faults, sporting behemoth Nike came up with a tag line that was so profound, it could be argued, that it was the single most important reason for its huge success; that tag line, of course: '*Just do it*'. Magic is encapsulated in these three words; lesson one in living the life of your dreams is that you must choose to do so. Dare to be brave and be the architect of your life. Oli, Dr Marc, Trent, Jacek and Tomasz have all taken this vital first step.

HOW DO YOU EAT AN ELEPHANT?

As the old school yard joke goes, 'One mouth full at a time.' Any big task - and living the life of your dreams is right up there - needs to be broken down into small, achievable goals. We all know this.

Being overwhelmed is often the biggest killer of dreams. When we approach mammoth tasks one step at a time, each small success leads to the belief and understanding that we really are capable of shaping our own realities and managing great ambition.

PASSION TO POUNDS!

The most beguiling characteristic of all our 'dream livers' is their deep passion for what they do. Their attention is firmly on what they love - jiu jitsu in all forms. Most people abort ideas of making their passion their living in fear that it will not pay the bills. But, strangely, life seems to have a way of consistently rewarding the passionate. Paradoxically, at the moment you remove your attention from that which you fear – in this case lack of money - and turn it instead onto that about which you are passionate, all your needs are met.

I am aware that some of these tips sound a little esoteric and 'hippy'. I hear you! But please, trust me on this. They have worked for Oli, Trent, Dr Marc, Tomasz, Jacek and countless others and they will, given the chance, work for you too.

What have you got to lose after all?

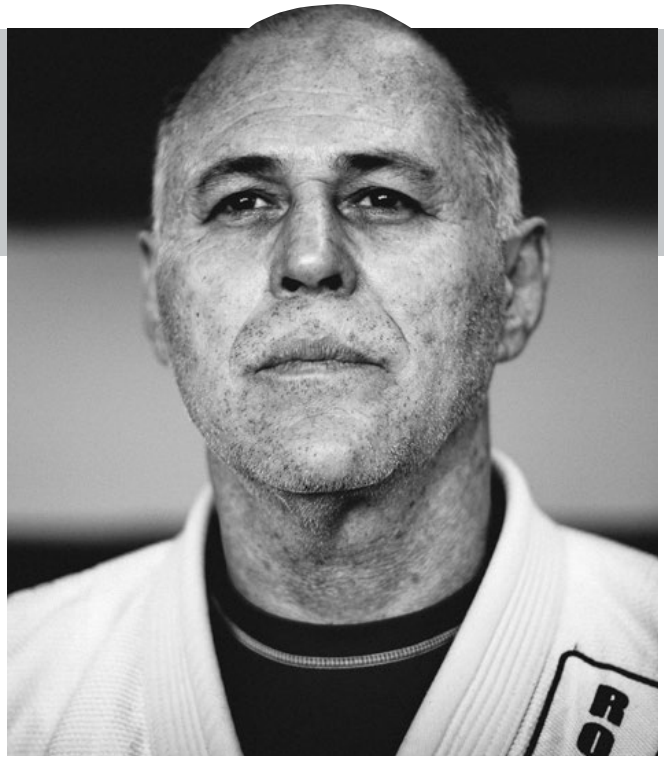
Oh yes, that's right; just the life of your dreams.

MATT JARDINE IS A FULL TIME TEACHER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS, WRITER AND AUTHOR. HE IS AN AVID EXPONENT OF 'LIVING THE LIFE OF YOUR DREAMS' AND HAS EVEN ENCOURAGED HIS WIFE TO DO THE SAME (WHICH HE NOW SORT OF REGRETS AS HE IS PICKING UP THE TAB FOR HER 'GAP YEAR').

MASTERCLASS

CHOKE AND KNEE DEFENCE

1: One of the most common things an attacker will do when confronting you on the street is to attempt to grab your neck with both hands. **2/3:** The first thing you should do is anticipate a knee attack. Lower your base, link your hands and extend your arms fully to prevent the strikes. **4/5/6:** As soon as you've blocked the knee strikes, duck your head down underneath your attacker's arms. At the same time take a wide step backwards with your left leg and arrive in a safe position.



MAURICIO GOMES

SELF-DEFENCE SPECIAL

MAURICIO GOMES IS A BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU CORAL BELT AND ONE OF A SMALL LIST OF STUDENTS TO HAVE BEEN AWARDED A BLACK BELT UNDER THE LATE ROLLS GRACIE. KNOWN AS A STANDOUT COMPETITOR IN THE 70S AND 80S, MAURICIO IS ALSO THE FATHER OF ROGER GRACIE.

IN THIS SPECIAL RENDITION OF MASTERCLASS, GOMES COVERS SOME FUNDAMENTAL SELF-DEFENCE TECHNIQUES THAT EVERY JIU JITSU PRACTITIONER SHOULD KNOW.

WRISTLOCK COUNTER

1: An attacker has their hands on your chest and is trying to push you backwards. **2:** Step backwards with your right leg to help stabilise your base. **3:** Next, control your attacker's right elbow with your left hand, while pinning their right hand to your chest with your right hand. **4:** Finally, bring both of your hands to your attacker's right elbow, securing their wrist tightly against your chest. Drive your body forwards and your hands backwards to apply a very tight wristlock.

1

2

3

4

ARMLOCK COUNTER

1: In this scenario your attacker has grabbed you by your jacket and will not let go. **2:** Grab your attacker's wrist with your right hand. **3/4:** Next, step forward with your left foot and control your attacker's left elbow with your left hand. **4:** Continue to move towards your attacker until their arm is resting on top of your shoulder. **5/6:** From here, continue to rotate to the right to arrive behind your opponent with their arm now behind their back. **7/8:** Raise your hips and your opponent's arm to secure the hold. Be aware that more pressure could break their arm.

1

2

3

4

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6

7

8

THROW COUNTER ATTACK

1: In this scenario an attacker has put both their hands on your shoulders and is approaching from behind. **2:** Reach back and control one of your opponent's hands as pictured. **3:** Start to twist your attacker's wrist and then gain control with both of your hands, ready to torque their whole arm. **4/5/6:** Walk backwards and continue to twist your attacker's wrist to force them down to the floor.

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ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game. Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com

Dear Braulio,
I am a BJJ fanatic, but have recently moved house and now find it tough to get on the mats as much as I'd like. I know you've had long periods off the mat with injury etc., so I wanted to see if you did anything away from actual training that you think helped your progression on the mats, if that makes sense?

- Ben

Hi Ben,
This is a very good question! A lot of times when I have a break because of an injury, a holiday, or whatever, when I come back I often feel better than before. Firstly this is because my body gets a break, but it's also because when I'm not training on the mat I tend to watch lots of competitions, visualise new positions and have time to think where I can improve. I do think taking a step back and visualising how you can improve goes a long way.

I would also suggest that if you can't train, you should still go and watch some classes. You will be amazed how much you can pick up from just watching some sparring and taking in what others are doing instead of concentrating on your own roll if you were training. I am also a big fan of the internet as a resource to help broaden your technical knowledge, as long as it comes from a good source. If you can't make it to training, watch fights online, see what works for the top guys and start to visualise new things you can add in to your own game.

LOOP CHOKE

Hi Braulio,
Do you ever use loop chokes as legitimate attacks? It would be great to know if and when you use them.

- Andy

Hi Andy,
I sometimes like to use it from the top position when your opponent tries to turn towards you. Check it out.

1: You have passed guard and reached knee on belly. 2/3: Your opponent pushes your knee off their chest and starts to turn towards you. As they turn, you sneak your right hand under their chin and secure their left lapel. 4: As they continue to turn, you bring your shoulder over the back of their head to set up the choke. 5/6/7: With the loop secured, move your opponent back to the side control position, but with your submission locked on.

ARM DRAG ATTACK

Hi Braulio
I'm looking at arm drags quite a bit at the moment and wanted to see if you had any tips?

- Mike

Hi Mike,
Here are some details that I like to apply when working an arm drag from the sitting position.

1: Starting from the seated guard. 2/3: Control your opponent's right sleeve with your left hand and hook their bicep with your right hand. 4: The detail I like to stress is that you should pin your opponent's right hand down on their hip. 5/6: Scoot your hips forward so you are close to your opponent, then start to sit backwards. 7/8/9: Elevate your opponent with your legs and complete the arm drag. From here you can start to attack the back.

Hi Braulio,
I'm now in my early thirties and trying to keep my training as consistent as it has always been, but it can be tough now with recovery taking longer and injuries coming more regularly. I wanted to ask if there are any positions or techniques you now avoid, simply to help maintain your body, and do you have any general tips that you employ to help keep you on the mats daily?

- Marco

Hi Marco,

I guess the main thing that I have noticed with age is that it takes longer to recover after a session. When you train jiu jitsu, or any kind of sport, the risk of injury due to repetition also increases over time. Like everyone, I have some muscles in my body that are more damaged than others because of my training. My lower back is probably the area that has suffered the most over the years because of my fighting style and my game – using lots of flexibility; positions like tornado guard and stuff like that.

As I've got older I have started to be much smarter with my training. I really advise that you do a very good warm up and not to try any physically demanding techniques too early in a session, or on people much heavier than you. I actually work quite hard trying to use pure technique in training and to limit the amount of power I use. There's an armbar from closed guard that my brother and I use, but I only try it at competitions now to limit the strain it puts on my body.

The main point I can stress is that you must learn to listen to your body. If your back is getting sore, then you must address your game and see if there are things you can change to stop this from happening as much. Also, don't try anything too drastic without working your way up to it. If you have never played rubber guard, then all of a sudden you're pulling on your foot to get to the position, you could pop your knee because your body isn't used to it – it's logical really.

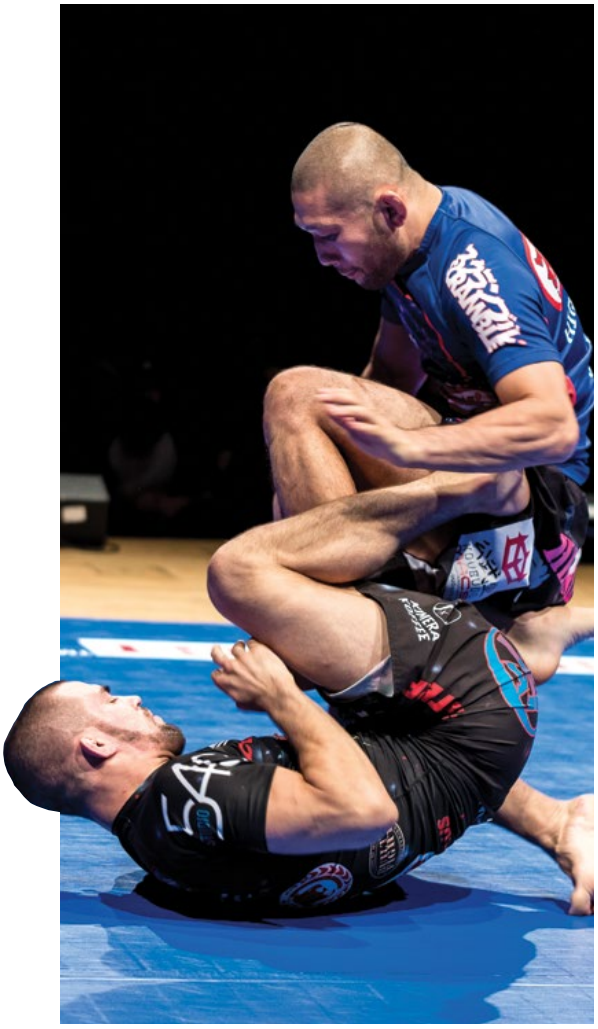
Hi Braulio,
What are your thoughts on the recent surge of leg locks being used in sport jiu jitsu? They seem to be "in fashion" at the moment, with guys like Tonon leading the way. Do you think leg locks are an under-used tool in BJJ? Should we learn them sooner? How do you police the use of them in training?

- Kerry

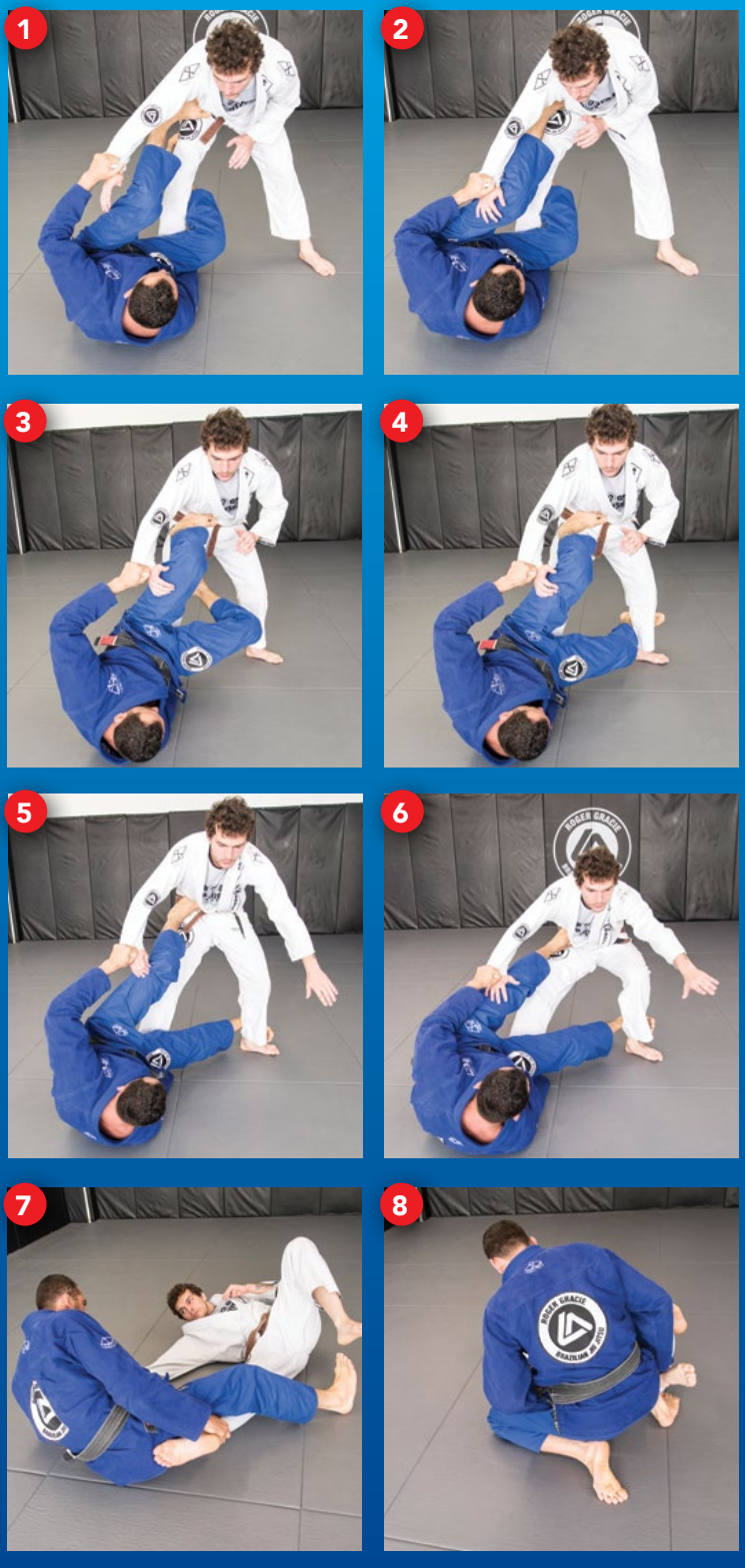
Hi Kerry,
I came from an old school academy, so when I started training if you tapped someone with a foot lock it was sort of considered a low blow. I remember people saying stuff like, 'ah, you know he wasn't able to beat me up, he just got my foot'. The thing is though, with the development of competitions and growth of jiu jitsu, people started to find new ways to win tournaments. In my opinion, the foot is a part of your body, just like an arm, so you attack it the same way. Jiu jitsu has had to progress and develop a new mentality with foot locks, that's for sure.

Leg locks are generally more popular at nogi academies, and heel hooks are still pretty new in jiu jitsu. There are not many tournaments you can enter where heel hooks are legal, especially at lower grades, so there is definitely less focus on them at many academies. If you look at judo and jiu jitsu, it is only the rules at competition that has created two different styles, so leg locks will become more and more prominent the more the rules in jiu jitsu allow them. Maybe leg locks are seen as fashionable, but in my eyes it's just because there are more competitions now allowing them.

At my academy, purple belts are aware of all leg locks. If you leave it until brown belt I feel it would be a little too late. It's a tough balancing act, because I think that early in your career you should concentrate more on playing the game of jiu jitsu and not necessarily on leg locks.



TRIPOD SWEEP



Hi
Do you have a good open guard sweep that you'd recommend to a newbie?

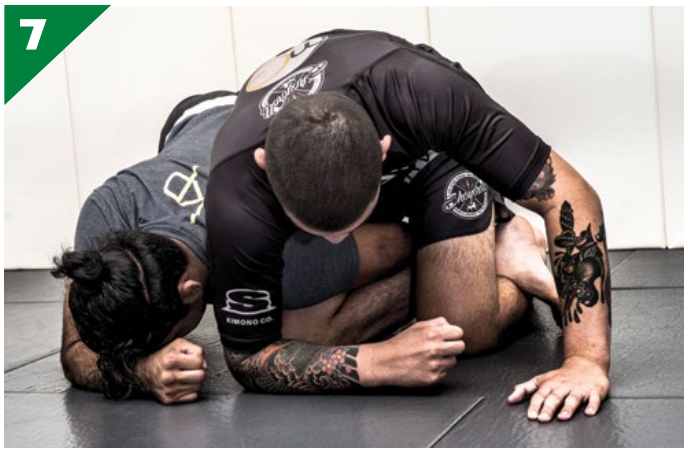
- Ben

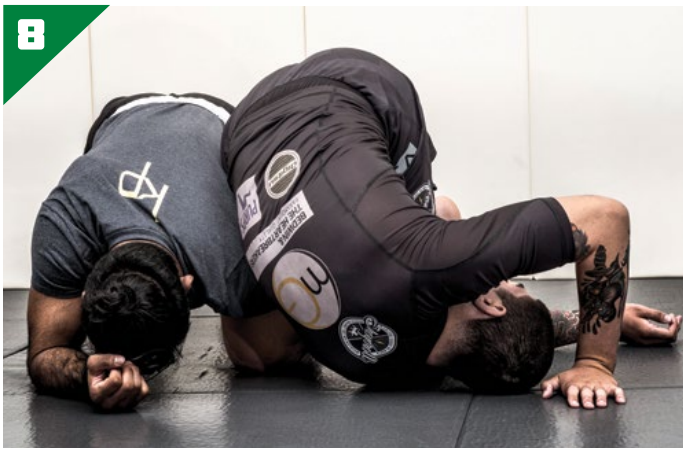
Hi Ben
I'd say the tripod sweep is a good one to look at initially – see what you think.

1: Starting from your open guard, this works well when your opponent stands up. 2: You have control of your opponent's right ankle with your right hand and a sleeve grip with your left hand. 3: Lift your hips off the mat. 4/5/6: Hook your right foot behind your opponent's left ankle and maintain all your grips. Push away with your left foot on their hip and drag your right foot towards you to drop your opponent to the mat. 7/8: As your opponent hits the mat, use the momentum to come on top in combat base.

REVERSE OMOPLATA

1: Starting from the turtle position, you secure a regular seatbelt grip on your opponent, but you are off to one side. **2/3/4:** Bring your left foot up and hook your opponent's left arm. Next, bring your left leg backwards and switch your foot position so that your right arm is now trapping your opponent's left arm. **5:** Lock off a triangle to secure your opponent's arm. **6/7/8/9:** Release your seatbelt grip and roll over your right shoulder to secure an omoplata. **10/11:** Often your opponent will roll to release the submission, so be ready to sit up and bring your right arm across their chest as they arrive on their back. **12:** From here, you can now shift backwards and lift your hips to secure a reverse omoplata.





SHEDDING THE GI

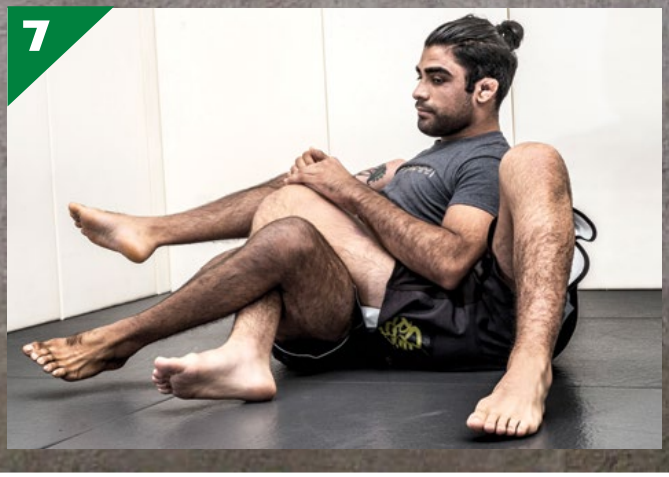
DILLON DANIS

Sharing some of his nogi secrets in this instalment of Shedding the Gi is Marcelo Garcia black belt, Dillon Danis! Having made a name for himself due to his electrifying performances as a brown belt, Danis has kicked-on to elite level over the past twelve months, with a standout submission victory over Joe Lauzon at Metamoris Pro topping his CV.

Here, Danis showcases a range of attacks and submissions when your opponent is in the turtle position.

BANANA SPLIT VARIATION

1: Starting from the turtle position on top. **2:** Quite often your opponent will try to control one of your legs by throwing their left leg over the top as pictured, but this is a mistake. **3/4:** Reach across your opponent's hip and underhook their right thigh with your right hand. **5/6/7:** You now have control of both of your opponent's legs with your right arm and right leg. Drop your weight heavily across their upper back and start to drive forwards, bringing their right leg with you. Arrive with your opponent in a seated position. **8:** Extend your leg and pull your arms into your chest to secure the groin stretch.



HEAD AND ARM CHOKE

1/2: Starting from the turtle position, drive your right arm under your opponent's armpit and cup their neck as pictured. **3/4/5/6:** Next, jump over your right shoulder and arrive with your back on the mat next to your opponent. Make sure you connect your hands on the way over as pictured. **7/8:** Move your hips towards your opponent's hips as you roll them over your body to finish the choke.

BACK TAKE ONE

1: Starting from the turtle position, you secure a regular seatbelt grip on your opponent. **2:** Drop your head to the mat over your opponent's left shoulder, and at the same time apply pressure to your opponent's neck with your right shoulder. **3/4/5/6/7/8:** The key here is to keep your seatbelt grip very tight as you post on your head, using the momentum to force your opponent into a roll. Quickly apply your hooks as you land on your back and start to attack.

BACK TAKE TWO

1: Starting from the turtle position, you secure a regular seatbelt grip on your opponent. **2/3:** As in back take one, keep your seatbelt grip very tight as you post on your head. However, this time your opponent has a very strong neck and doesn't roll with you. **4/5/6:** Maintain your seatbelt and in a fluid motion bring your hips backwards to secure the hooks from the top. **7/8:** Use your momentum to roll your opponent to their back if you prefer to attack that way.

TECHNIQUE

PASSING THE SIT UP GUARD

GUARD PASS ONE

1: Your opponent is in sit up guard and controlling your right leg, while at the same time blocking your left leg with their foot. **2:** Start by back stepping and changing levels, making sure you control your opponent's belt and right knee. Also, keep your shoulder driving into your opponent's face. **3:** Sit on the floor, keeping tight shoulder pressure against your opponent's face. **4/5:** Maintain your shoulder pressure and at the same time push your opponent's left leg downwards while pulling their right knee towards you. **6:** Shrimp your hips backwards to free your leg. **7/8:** Switch your base and keep pushing your opponent's right leg away to secure the pass.

WITH NICK BROOKS

IT CAN BE VERY TOUGH TO DEAL WITH AN OPPONENT WHO USES THE SIT UP GUARD EFFECTIVELY – ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE ALSO A GOOD WRESTLER. HERE ARE A FEW PASSES AND SUBMISSIONS THAT I FIND WORK VERY WELL.

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GUARD PASS TWO

1: Your opponent is in sit up guard and controlling your right leg, while at the same time blocking your left leg with their foot. **2:** Control your opponent's right knee and take a small back step. **3:** Next, step forwards and over your opponent's right knee, punching it down between your legs. Keep your hips as low as possible during this process. **4/5/6:** Control your opponent's right sleeve and drive your hips forward. **7/8/9:** Next, cross face your opponent and control their head. Free your trapped leg and arrive in mount.

GUARD PASS TO LOOP CHOKE

1: Your opponent is in sit up guard and controlling your right leg, and at the same time is posting on their right hand for support. Gain a cross grip of their collar. **2/3:** Cup the back of your opponent's head and push it under your armpit to loop the collar around their neck. **4:** Next, step forwards and reach between your legs, controlling their right knee. **5/6/7/8:** Complete a forward roll and land on your back. **9:** Finally, bridge and pull both arms towards you to complete the submission.

GUARD PASS TO OMOPLATA

1: Your opponent is in sit up guard and controlling your right leg, and at the same time is posting on their right hand for support. **2/3:** Drive your knee forward and circle your foot to the outside of your opponent's hip. **4/5:** Drive your opponent's back to the floor and roll over their body. **6/7/8:** Keep rolling while turning towards your opponent's head. **9:** Finally, sit up to complete the omoplata.

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BELTS AND GRADINGS

IS IT OK FOR US TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR NEXT PROMOTION?

Belts and gradings are a much debated topic in the world of Brazilian jiu jitsu. Experienced practitioners may tell you to forget about the belt, that it's more about the journey than the destination. And they're quite possibly right…but easier said than done! On the other hand, the very same practitioners spend years working their way through the ranks and feel extremely proud when they are awarded their black belts.

So it is ok for us to be concerned about our next promotion? Like so many topics from a sport psychology point of view, the answer is, it depends….

After years of doing and teaching BJJ, many instructors realise that the best form of motivation is intrinsic – when you do jiu jitsu for the love of it. When athletes are intrinsically motivated they tend to enjoy the sport more, stay in it for the long haul and perform better over the long term. So intrinsic motivation is good motivation.

Sometimes belt promotions can act as an extrinsic reward and change an athlete's motivation. When a jiu jitsu practitioner has the goal of achieving the next grade, a few different things might happen to their motivation. If they are promoted, this can lead to a drop in motivation because they have achieved their goal and the next belt seems so far away. On the other hand, it may spur them on to keep progressing.

"IF A STUDENT ASKS WHAT THEY NEED TO WORK ON FOR THEIR NEXT BELT, IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THEY ARE ASKING FOR A PROMOTION OR HAVE AN INFLATED EGO"

Similarly, it can go one of two ways when an athlete thinks they may be ready for their next belt but the promotion isn't forthcoming. It might drive them to work even harder to prove they are ready for the next level, or they may give up trying.

Whether it should be or not, a belt can be a motivating factor. But clearly not everyone responds in the same way. Motivation experts suggest that an extrinsic reward like a new stripe or belt can act as a form of positive feedback. At its best, being graded gives us some indication that we are making progress in our jiu jitsu, and that we've improved over the past few days, weeks, months and years.

Essentially, it gives us feedback that we are increasingly competent at jiu jitsu. And because we have an innate human need to feel competent, this leaves us feeling happy, energised and positive about doing jiu jitsu.

Another basic human psychological need is the need for autonomy. That is, we want to feel that we have the freedom to make our own choices, and this includes choices in jiu jitsu. People endeavour to achieve the next belt for a variety of reasons. For example, some jiu jitsu participants may want the status and respect associated with a higher grade, while others may want to avoid criticism from their instructor, or to make their family proud.

Reasons like these are more external than internal, and have a controlling effect on an athlete's motivation and behaviour. This in turn undermines their sense of autonomy. These athletes don't put in effort and persevere because they want to; they try hard because they feel they have to. And it's a challenge to sustain this kind of motivation over the long term.

Instructors can do much to encourage a positive approach to belts. As professors we are responsible for the social environment that is created in the dojo and we influence how our students interpret a promotion.

One helpful way to do this is to be clear with students about the criteria we use when judging whether a student is ready for the next level. This doesn't necessarily mean creating a list of required techniques for each belt or introducing formal testing.

It just means being transparent about what we're expecting the student to work on and having open conversations with students. When they do receive the next coveted promotion, it gives them valuable information about their progressing level of competence. If a student asks what they need to work on for their next belt, it doesn't necessarily mean they are asking for a promotion or have an inflated ego.

As instructors, we also need to create an autonomy-supportive environment which supports our students' sense of choice and encourages them to take the initiative in their own learning.

At one time or another we've probably all come across martial arts environments which are authoritarian, pressuring and dictatorial. We should be careful to emphasise the link between belts and the athlete's performance. Using promotions as a reward for loyalty to the instructor, an incentive for seminar attendance or as pressure to compete is not so helpful.

In an ideal world, if students are loyal to their instructor, attend seminars or compete, it will be because they want to, not because they have to in order to achieve their next belt. At least, this should be the case if we want our athletes to be motivated in a positive, self-sustaining way over the long term.

So is a focus on working towards your next belt a bad thing? Well, not necessarily. As students of BJJ, we just need to make sure that our striving for the next belt is underpinned by healthy motives, such as the desire for competency and personal progress.

Dr Rebecca Hill is a Psychologist chartered by the British Psychological Society with a PhD in Sport and Exercise Psychology. She is also a BJJ black belt competitor under Professor Victor Estima and a current European Champion. She blogs about sport psychology and BJJ at www.rebeccalhill.com.

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MACRO NUTRIENTS

SO HERE WE ARE WITH THE FINAL INSTALMENT OF THE MACRO SERIES!

If you have read through the last three instalments you will have a much better understanding of what protein, fats and carbohydrates do and which ones are best for which purpose. If you have no idea what I'm talking about then I suggest you go back and read the previous three issues and have your mind blown (well as much as one can have their mind blown by macronutrients).

In this article I will cover how to combine all the macronutrients into one sensible nutrition plan. Obviously, the entire scope of such a topic can fill books so this will be a very basic overview. The point of any great, intelligent nutrition plan is to give you a good starting point on which to make adjustments based on the results you see.

Before we go into more detail, it always has to be mentioned that every individual is different and that everyone should talk to their doctor, coach or consult a professional before you undertake any major changes to your lifestyle (especially if you are a little new to all of this). Nutrition is a very individual thing and each person responds to everything a little differently. There is no cookie cutter plan that will work for everyone. The best thing that you can do is to try things and adjust based on the results you get (this is the real magic of a nutrition plan).

As previously mentioned in other articles, foods can be broken down into protein, carbs (carbohydrates) and fats. It is the manipulation of these that will give us the results that we require. So let's take a look at them and see what they do specifically to our bodies (guns and gut, ladies and gentlemen).

I'm not going to go through exactly which macros do what, as most of you will be bored since I went through them all in the past article. What I am now going to focus on are certain key factors that you can use to put them all together.

Before I go through the macro set up we have to look at one major factor that governs your success above nearly all others: calories.

Whilst WHAT we eat can be more important than how much we eat, calories still play a very important part in whether we are losing, gaining or maintaining our weight.

I know there are a lot of plans out there at the moment that say you don't have to count calories. There is nothing wrong with these plans and some get great results. With my clients, I always take into account calories (as well as other variables) to achieve the best results for putting people in a cage or on the mat to destroy their opponents. Remember, it is the full picture that we need to look at. Don't be distracted by the latest miracle programme; the basic principles must always be adhered to in order to get the most from any nutritional plan.

Ok, so what are the starting points on calorie intake? Firstly, we need to take a look at what your goals are. Are you looking to drop a weight class? Are you looking to gain muscle and power in the off-season, or just to maintain a certain weight over a period of time? When you have a definitive goal then we can take the next step in setting up a programme.

Let's take a look:

• For losing weight, I recommend 10 calories for every pound of body weight. So a 165 lb (75 kg) person would take in 1650 calories every single day and then adjust from there.

• For gaining muscle, I recommend 20 calories per pound of body weight. So our 165 lb client would ingest 3300 calories a day then adjust depending on results and other factors (quality of gains, muscle and strength gains vs fat gain etc.).

• For maintaining what you have, I recommend 15 calories per pound. So a 165 lb individual would take in 2475 calories a day.

Within these calorific breakdowns we need to ascertain the macro nutrients (protein, carbs, fats) that will make up our intake (see previous articles). I've outlined the basic starting point for losing fat, gaining muscle and maintaining. Again, and I can't stress this enough, these are only starting points and it is the adjustments and knowing what to adjust and when to do it that makes the difference to a successful nutrition plan.

Ok, so what are we looking at?

LOSING FAT

• Protein is a minimum of 1g per pound of body weight. So our 165 lb (75kg) individual will take in 165g of protein EVERY SINGLE DAY.

• Carbs will be set at 0.5g per pound. So the 165 lb person will take in 82g per day.

• With fats, the 165 lb person will take in 0.5g of fat per pound (82g every day).

GAINING MUSCLE

• Protein is a minimum of 1.5g per pound of body weight. So our 165 lb (75kg) individual will take in 247g of protein EVERY SINGLE DAY.

• Carbs will be set at 1.5g per pound. So the 165 lb person will take in 247g per day.

• With fats, the 165 lb person will take in 1.5g of fat per pound (247g every day).

MAINTAINING CURRENT WEIGHT

• Protein is a minimum of 1.5g per pound of body weight. So our 165 lb (75kg) individual will take in 247g of protein EVERY SINGLE DAY.

• Carbs will be set at 1g per pound of body weight, per day. This will give us 165g everyday.

• With fats, the 165 lb person will take in 0.25g of fat per pound (41g every day).

Again, these are just the basics of setting up a plan. The full scope of having the optimal diet is different for each individual and is well beyond the scope of this series of articles. The idea behind this series is to give you the initial building blocks of knowledge so you can go out and experiment, read, learn and find out what works for you. This may look like a lot of numbers, and there's some hard work figuring out what works for you, but nothing worth having comes easy.

The second most important thing to look at for individuals is nutrient timing. I like my clients to have the majority of their carb intake around their workouts and training sessions.

For most, this means a solid pre, intra and post schedule of fast digesting carbs and easily digested protein (it's very important to use products that digest and leave the stomach quickly not to cause stomach upset and to give the body all it needs around training). Then, based on their allowance, they may have a meal containing carbs before or after training (this is down to how an individual responds as some train and recover better with carbs before training).

I like to use fast acting carbs that are digested quickly in these meals (like white rice). For other fast acting carb sources please see my issue 28

article on carbs.

I keep fat out of meals during this period (fat slows down digestion when added to a meal) and use lean, easily digested protein at this time as well (such as turkey, chicken breast, lean pork loin, etc.). This is very important as it allows the body to put the nutrients to work quickly and help the body recover.

As for protein and fat, I like to keep them both in every meal outside of the training window. Protein and fat should be divided up equally between meals. This is because protein and fat help you to feel fuller for longer and make a much more satisfying meal. Plus, as we know, protein helps the recovery of muscle and other tissues in the body (tendons for grapplers) and correct fat intake helps with hormone production (such as testosterone for recovery).

It is also worth labouring the point that you should eat a large variety of foods to help make sure you get in all the adequate nutrients. Try to have a lot of different coloured vegetables, eat a few pieces of fruit a day and rotate your protein sources; look outside of the box for things like fish, bison and other wild game).

When learning a new skill, from driving a car to learning an instrument or setting up a quality nutrition or weight plan, it is always worth using a professional to help remove the stress and to get you started. Hopefully however, using my last few articles, you have enough information for a great starting point for a nutrition plan that will help you to train harder, recover faster and turn you into a beast on the mats!

As always I welcome well thought out comments or questions. Feel free to drop me a line.

Stay healthy,

Mike

Unorthodox Nutrition work with athletes worldwide, from local stars right the way through to UFC fighters, Premiership Footballers and World Champions. They specialise in helping combat athletes lose fat and gain muscle so that they can operate to the maximum of their potential during training and competition.

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FIT 2 FIGHT

ARE YOU GUILTY OF USING THESE EXCUSES?

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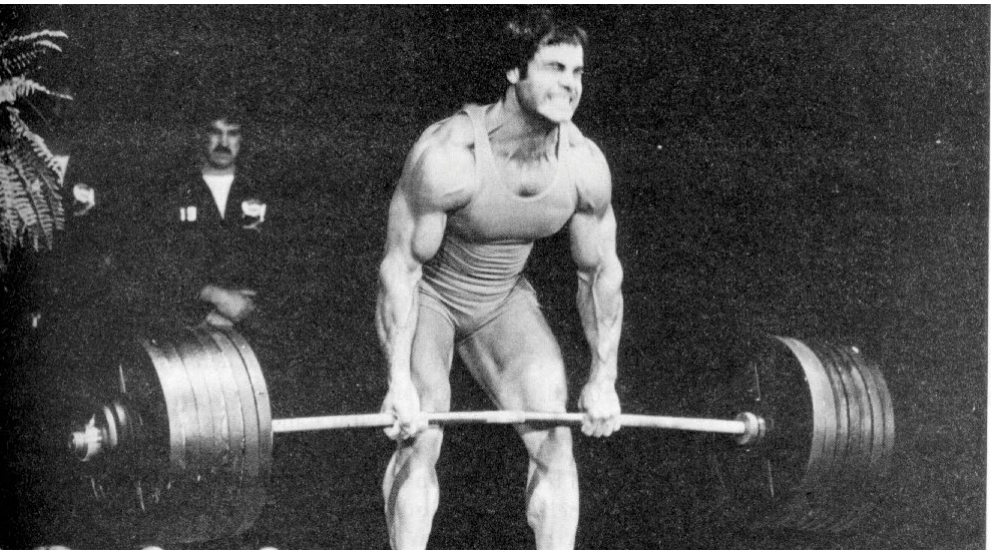
EXCUSES ARE EVERYWHERE. WE'VE ALL GOT THEM AND USE THEM MORE THAN WE SHOULD. I'VE BEEN GUILTY OF THIS AND I'M SURE YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN AN OFFENDER AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER AS WELL.



Put simply, we all need to stop making excuses. No one wants to hear them and no one gives a ***t.

Here is a list of some of my favourite excuses:

I DON'T SQUAT BECAUSE THEY'RE BAD FOR THE KNEES.

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SQUAT BELOW PARALLEL.

I DON'T NEED TO DO LEGS BECAUSE I RUN AND GO ON THE STAIR CLIMBER.

I'M JUST GETTING BACK INTO IT. (FOR TWO YEARS?!)

TODAY IS MY LIGHT DAY. (WHAT ABOUT ALL THE OTHER DAYS?)

I DON'T CARE ABOUT GETTING STRONG; I JUST WANT TO BE BIG.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT GETTING BIG; I JUST WANT TO BE STRONG.

I DON'T WANT TO GET TOO BIG. (AS IF THAT WAS POSSIBLE.)

I DIDN'T EAT ENOUGH TODAY.

I ATE TOO MUCH TODAY.

MY DIET HAS SUCKED LATELY.

I DRANK TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT.

I HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH WATER TODAY.

I DIDN'T GET TO HAVE COFFEE BEFORE MY WORKOUT.

I DON'T WANT TO GET CALLUSES.

I DON'T WANT TO GET INJURED.

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EAT THAT MUCH. (YES YOU DO.)

I CAN'T EAT THAT MUCH. (YES YOU CAN.)

I DON'T WANT TO GET FAT.

I HAVE CRAPPY GENETICS. (JOIN THE CLUB.)

I JUST INJURED MY_____ LAST WEEK.

I CAN'T SQUAT BECAUSE I HAVE BAD KNEES. (SOMETIMES LEGITIMATE, OFTEN NOT.)

I CAN'T SQUAT OR DEAD LIFT BECAUSE I HAVE A BAD BACK. (SAME AS ABOVE.)

I LIFTED A LOT MORE THAN THAT LAST TIME. (WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED, I WONDER?)

I JUST WANT TO GET CUT.

I DON'T LIKE WORKING THAT HARD. (THEN TAKE UP SEWING.)

I CAN'T GET MOTIVATED.

I'M JUST NOT INTO IT ANY MORE.

HEAVY LIFTING IS DANGEROUS.

HE DIDN'T TOUCH THE BAR, THAT WAS ALL ME. (OK)

THERE'S NO NEED TO LIFT ALL THAT HEAVY WEIGHT.

YOU CAN GET GREAT RESULTS WITH LIGHT WEIGHTS AND SLOW TEMPOS. (IT SHOWS.)

IF I TOOK STEROIDS, I WOULD LOOK LIKE THAT TOO. (NO YOU WOULDN'T.)

IF I TOOK STEROIDS, I WOULD BE THAT STRONG TOO. (DITTO.)

I FEEL WEAK TODAY.

I FEEL SICK TODAY.

I'M TIRED TODAY.

I FEEL LIKE CRAP TODAY.

I DIDN'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP LAST NIGHT. (JOIN THE CLUB.)

I'M TOO STRESSED OUT.

I'M TOO BUSY.

I'M TOO OLD.

I'M DEPRESSED.

I HAVE TOO MUCH WORK TO DO.

I'LL TRAIN LATER.

I'LL TRAIN TOMORROW.

I DON'T HAVE TIME.

I CAN'T. (I KNOW.)

If you currently use or have recently used any of these excuses, it's time to stop; let's eliminate excuses from this day forward. They're for losers and you want to be a winner, right?

There is no tomorrow. The time is now. Take charge and don't look back.

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MACACO BRANCO "RASHGUARD JUNGLE"

Macaco Branco are an exciting new jiu jitsu brand based in Finland, offering up premium BJJ apparel that has been "designed for primates around the world". Staying true to their brand ethos, their new rashguard is set to be a huge hit for fans of primate inspired gear.

This long sleeve rashguard is constructed from 80% polyester and 20% spandex, with all artwork sublimated so you don't have to worry about designs peeling off. The rashguard fit is very comfortable and hugs your body in all the right areas without feeling too tight.

The main Macaco Branco monkey design sits across the chest and it's fair to say that it's pretty eye catching! The mix of deep green and grey colouring on the black rashguard is pretty awesome, and the monkey's fiery red eyes are a nice touch.

The back of the rashguard features Macaco Branco wording and some subtle linear design details, with some more areas of green finishing off the lower back section. There are also prominent Macaco Branco logos on both upper arm sections.

The rashguard was very comfortable to wear both under the gi and in nogi classes, and has all the tell tale signs of a durable, high quality product that will be in your kitbag for a long time. Like many rashguards, the artwork is the main selling point of this product, but primate fans can also rest assured that this is a top quality piece of kit.

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DOMINYKA OBELENYTE - SPIDER VARIATIONS AND DOMOPLATA

Black belt World Champion, Dominyka Obelenyte, shows off some of her favourite moves. The set is split roughly into two halves: the first showcasing seven spider guard sweeps, the second half concentrating on submissions. The most notable moves of the set are her 'Domoplata' attacks and the shoulder wrenching 'coat hanger of destruction'.

Dominyka Obelenyte is the current 2015 female black belt World Champion (weight and absolute). Looking at her fights, Dominyka favours playing a very attacking open guard game, throwing out dangerous submissions pretty much at will. One of her submissions is a variation on the omoplata, something she refers to as the 'Domoplata', and another of her moves is something she calls the 'coat hanger of destruction'.

Dominyka kicks off the set with a half dozen or so fairly basic spider guard sweeps but with only seven techniques on offer, it's a brief introduction at most to a guard system that can offer much more intricacy and variability.

As someone who grew up for most of her life in the USA, Dominyka speaks perfect English and her instruction is concise and clear as she talks through each technique.

The latter half of the set far more interesting. The Domoplata is best described as a gogoplata choke but executed from the top mount position. Dominyka introduces the technique from mount position and instructs us to make sure the opponent beneath you has his arms clear and out of the way - something that no resisting opponent would willingly ever do in reality. Some further explanation of how to get into the Domoplata (and ensuring the arms are cleared out of the way) would be helpful.

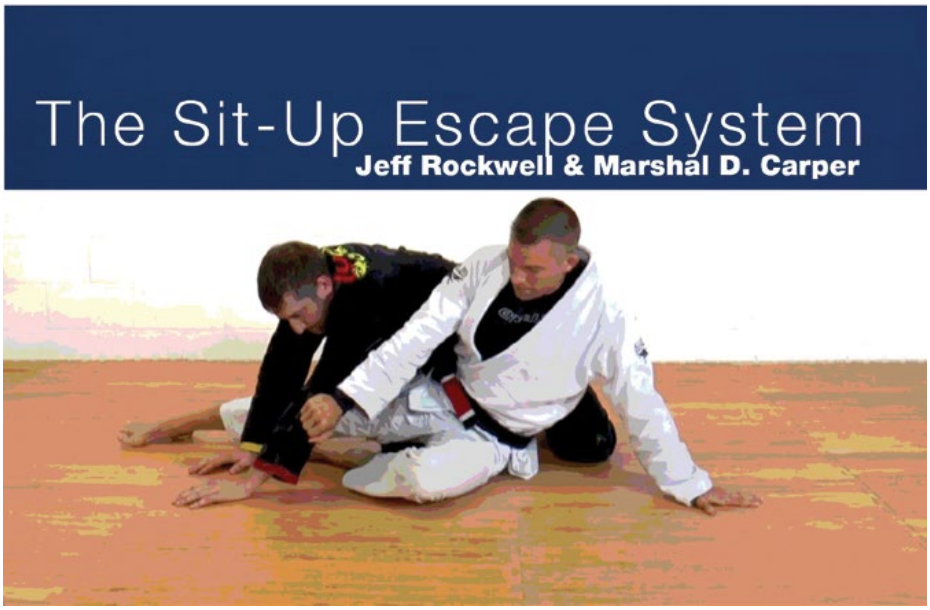
The coat hanger of destruction submission is very similar to the technique Michelle Nicolini executed on Tammi Musumeci and broke her arm with. Dominyka's coat hanger is no less nasty than the Nicolini one and unless you are hyper flexible there isn't really much of a way to escape. It's basically a counter to someone defending an omoplata.

Ideally, more depth to this video set would make for more informed viewing, for example, a further exploration of how one can transition from omoplata - to coat hanger - to Domoplata. As an introduction to the spider guard sweep, this set is a good basic all-rounder for beginners. For more experienced players, the Domoplata might be a new submission to study and add to the omoplata-family of submission techniques.

Overall, the production quality is excellent and the brevity of the entire set (23 minutes) make it easy to digest and absorb in one or two sittings.

AVAILABLE FROM: DIGITSU.COM AS A PLAY ON DEMAND VIDEO OR DIGITAL DOWNLOAD FOR $19.99

THE SIT-UP ESCAPE SYSTEM – JEFF ROCKWELL AND MARSHAL D CARPER



Many jiu jitsu students find being stuck under side control one of the harder aspects to sparring and competing. Sometimes the regular shrimping out of side control manoeuvre just isn't good enough. The sit-up escape system offers a way to escape side control (and many other positions) without requiring shrimping or even much in the way of grips.

This eBook is only available as a cloud instructional. The contents cannot be downloaded (apart from the gifs) so you'll need a decent internet connection. The book is split into seven chapters. The entire first chapter is free and available to view without requiring membership or login.

Each chapter opens with a lengthy written explanation plus each subsequent page includes written commentary. The writing is concise and easy to follow. It's not necessary to read everything, but if you treat this title like a fun, fact filled book about jiu jitsu (rather than a dry technical manual), then you'll find that the pleasant writing tone and style makes the content very accessible.

Rockwell himself comes across very well. His level of detail is very precise without over burdening the reader. The sound quality is fine and the filming quality, although basic, is perfectly adequate for the purpose of learning technique.

The one, major negative about this eBook is the tedium of having to wait for pages and video content to load. The animated gifs are good though, and saving them onto a hard drive and tablet is a good way to transfer snippets of content for quick access.

As with any single system instructional, it's vital to study the opening chapters in order to understand the basics that will carry you through the rest of the book. It's great that the opening chapter is free content on the Artechoke website; this alone is worth a visit, if only to give the reader a bare bones summary of how the sit-up escape can work. Rockwell openly states in his introduction that a lot of the sit-up escape system was initiated by his study of Marcelo Garcia.

In addition to the basic sit-up escape, Rockwell covers all of the common mistakes and pitfalls and how to deal with them. In the process, Rockwell also covers escapes from other positions – and it all adds up to a more complete escape package than the title might suggest. The Meerkat is a useful position to be in and one that most students will end up at one time or other.

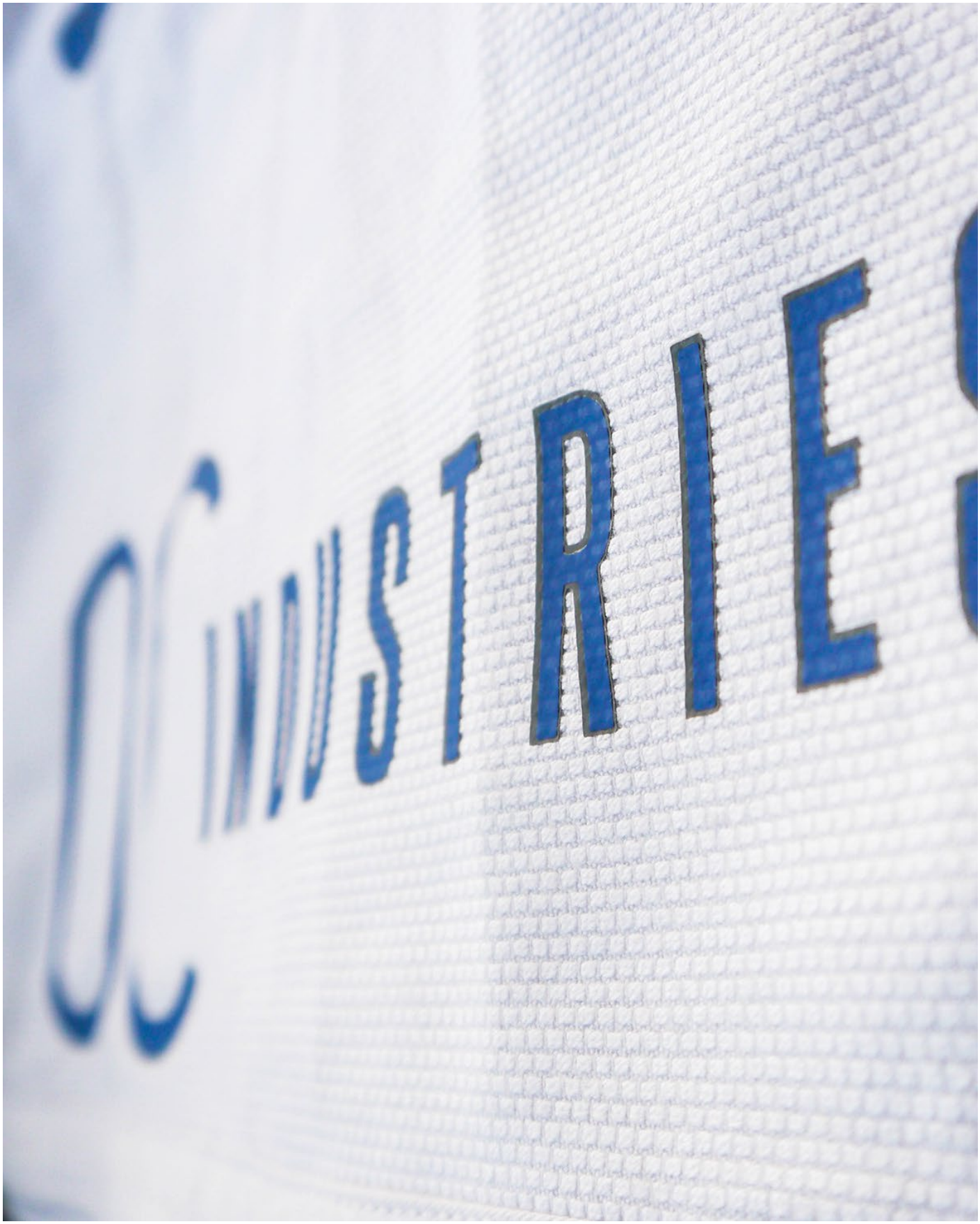
A lot of the concepts described reminded a lot of the way Ryan Hall teaches his jiu jitsu - with his emphasis on bodily structure. This is especially so with chapter 3 and is a useful foundation behind a lot of jiu jitsu techniques.

This eBook finishes with some suggested drills - useful if the whole idea of the sit up is a new concept.

The BJJ instructional market has very few specific escape dedicated titles. Rockwell's explanations and demonstrations are very well executed and together with Marshal D Carper's written text, the whole eBook is a media rich learning tool. The only downside was the very slow loading times to watch the videos on each page.

The Sit-Up Escape System is available as an eBook cloud instructional via the Artechoke Publishing website for $44, payable by PayPal only.

WWW.ARTECHOKEMEDIA.COM



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GI SPOTLIGHT

TATAMI FIGHTWEAR ESTILO 5.0 BLACK & BLACK

OVERVIEW

Tatami Fightwear's Estilo 5.0 is, without doubt, one of the finest kimonos on the market, and the new Black & Black offering is perhaps their most stylish option yet. With all the functionality and feel of a premium Tatami product, paired with super slick design, this is a real Rolls Royce of a gi!

JACKET

The Estilo 5.0 jacket is constructed from 550gsm pearl weave cotton, which we feel is an ideal weight for maintaining a sturdy and durable feel without becoming too hot and heavy when rolling. As the name suggests, the jacket is almost exclusively black, with the only exceptions being the white lapel label and red 5.0 wording across the left chest panel. The trademark Tatami Fightwear logos sit across the shoulder panels of both arms, with the black stitching just popping out against the main black jacket. The inner neck section of the jacket also features cool jiu jitsu artwork created by well known BJJ artist and enthusiast, Phillip Lietz.

TROUSERS

One of our favourite features of the Tatami Fightwear Estilo 5.0 is the inclusion of 12oz canvas cotton trousers instead of using ripstop cotton. These trousers feel completely bomb proof and extremely comfortable while rolling. As with the jacket, the only deviation away from the black theme comes via a white label on the upper left hip section. The Estilo logo sits on the lower right leg, and Tatami Fightwear logos are present on both sides of the trousers – once again all in black.

DETAILS

One of the main benefits of the Estilo range is that you can rest assured that the sizes are accurate and that the gis offer little to no shrinkage after extensive washing. With this being Tatami Fightwear's fifth rendition of the Estilo, there have been plenty of considerations and innovations to cater for maximum comfort and durability.

SUMMARY

The Tatami Fightwear Estilo has always been one the highest quality kimonos on the market, and now with the release of their Black & Black version, they've created one of their most stylish products to date.

As soon as we saw the pictures of this gi, we knew we had to have it. Priced at £99, you are getting a top of the range product at a very fair price.

AVAILABLE VIA

WWW.TATAMIFIGHTWEAR.COM

FOR £99

WORDS: HANNAH GORMAN

POLARIS PRO 2

TOURNAMENT REVIEW

On September 12th the second Polaris Professional Invitational was hosted, once again at St David's Hall in the centre of Cardiff. The card boasted some incredible match ups with an interesting twist of pitting old school legends against one another and with a sprinkling of new generation elite grapplers thrown in for good measure.

PEDRO BESSA VS LUCA ANACORETA

The opening fight featured a crowd favourite, Pedro Bessa, who faced off against Italy's Luca Anacoreta. The crowd was full of Pedro's supporters, shouting and cheering him on throughout the match. There's no doubt that having teams come out in force to support their head instructors makes for a great atmosphere.

ANACORETA WINS VIA TRIANGLE

Bessa pulled guard, straight to de la Riva, and both competitors initially adopted a slow and calculated approach for the first few minutes of the fight. After feeling each other out, Anacoreta pulled off an incredible long step pass where he managed to maintain control for a while before Bessa quickly regained his de la Riva guard. Bessa worked for a sweep from his guard, but Anacoreta broke away and both fighters came to their feet.

Bessa pulled de la Riva again, and this time managed to sweep to come on top, which was followed by a roar from the crowd. Bessa got to work at passing Anacoreta's guard, but Anacoreta managed to capture one of Bessa's arms during a pass attempt and he started to lock up a triangle. Bessa put up a valiant fight and fought off the attack for a few minutes, but Anacoreta was tightening the choke little by little which eventually earned him the submission.

GRIPPO WINS VIA HEEL HOOK

GIANNI GRIPPO VS TOM BARLOW

The first of the nogi match ups featured IBJJF Masters Champion, Tom Barlow, taking on 4x IBJJF World Champion, Gianni Grippo. Both are small, strong fighters who have fast and immensely technical fighting styles. Grippo, renowned for his reverse de la Riva and berimbolo style back takes, pulled open guard to start. Barlow kept his distance and made a series of short, fast bursts at trying to pass Grippo's guard. Grippo went for a reverse de la Riva sweep which ended up in a battle for the leg lock. Both playing guard, Grippo took the top position and made an attempt to pass, but then decided to settle for a double guard position instead.

Both fighters spent a few moments trying to set up leg lock attacks, then Barlow managed to latch on to Grippo's leg. Grippo stood up and escaped, and then turned immediately for a fast knee-slide pass. Barlow managed to create enough space to get to his feet, where Grippo then pulled open guard.

The exchanges were fast and relentless, both fighters equally defending each other's attacks. They eventually ended up in 50:50 guard and battled for each other's feet, before Grippo caught a heel hook on Barlow. He tried to roll out but it was too late; a great submission for Grippo, who proved he was capable of playing the leg lock game too.

MOURA AND YOSHIDA FIGHT TO A DRAW

ROBSON MOURA VS BARET YOSHIDA

This was the first fight featuring some of the older generation of fighters. Yoshida pulled guard and almost pulled off a beautiful butterfly guard sweep from the guard pull, but Moura had heavy hips and somehow managed to maintain balance. The crowd stirred with excitement as they knew they were in for a good fight. Moura passed guard with a beautiful long step pass, but Yoshida quickly recovered his half guard before getting full guard on Moura.

Yoshida spent a few minutes tangling up Moura with his foot in Moura's lapel, which slowed down any passing opportunities for Moura. He managed to break out of Yoshida's lapel guard and pass the guard, which initiated a scramble where Moura managed to capture Yoshida's arm. The crowd could smell the submission and were cheering Moura to get the tap. The armlock was on so tight that the cheers started to turn to gasps as Yoshida showed no sign of giving up. Somehow he managed to escape, which was greeted with even more excited cheering from the crowd.

Yoshida managed to entangle Moura in what I'm immediately copywriting as 'pretzel guard' (back off, Keenan). After a few minutes of head tilting and baffled looks from the crowd, Yoshida managed to advance Moura in a twister position whilst working to attack a choke. Moura escaped and was brought into Yoshida's closed guard with one minute left on the clock. He desperately tried to pass, but both looked exhausted from their non-stop exchanges. The buzzer sounded and ended this fight as a draw.

VITOR 'SHAOLIN' RIBEIRO VS NAKAMURA DAISUKE

SHAOLIN WINS VIA COLLAR CHOKE

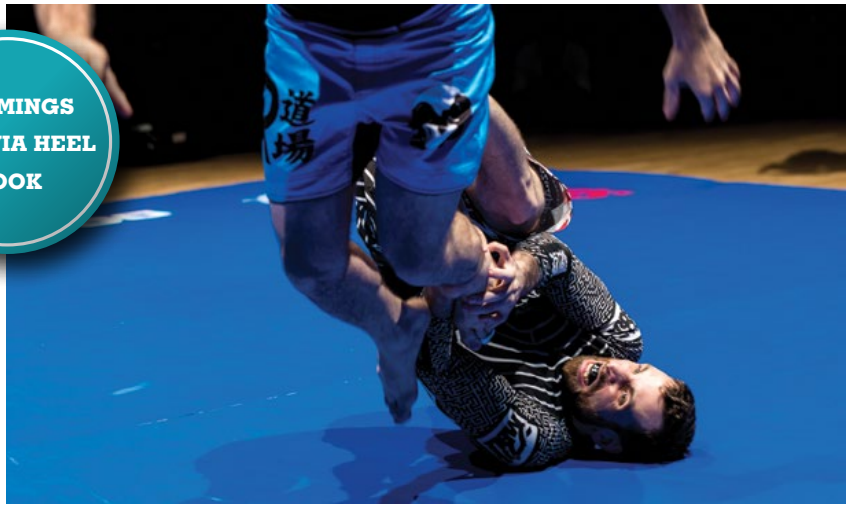
Another old school match-up, that did not fail to deliver on excitement. Both fighters looked comfortable to play the stand-up game to start, as they spent a few moments grip fighting before Shaolin pulled his infamous half guard. He worked hard for the sweep and was rewarded when he gripped the leg and stood up before tripping and securing top position. The crowd cheered the sweep, but Daisuke managed to spin underneath Shaolin and counter-sweep almost instantly, creating an extended cheer that turned into a roar as the crowd realised they were in for a good fight!

Moments later, Shaolin managed to sweep again, setting the tone for this absolute sweep-fest of a match ('sweep-fest' is a word, right?). Daisuke tried to stand and sweep, but Shaolin turned the movement into his own single leg attack, securing the take-down.

The same pattern followed, as Daisuke managed to counter-sweep almost instantly, but this time both fighters came to their feet. Shaolin managed to capitalise by jumping on the exhausted Daisuke's back, but even then Daisuke attempted to throw him! The crowd were cheering like crazy as Shaolin somehow managed to maintain control of Daisuke's back. He secured the hooks as Daisuke was brought to the floor. Shaolin moved to high mount where he submitted Daisuke with a collar choke which was met with loud cheers from the crowd. A fantastic non-stop match-up which was exhausting even to watch!

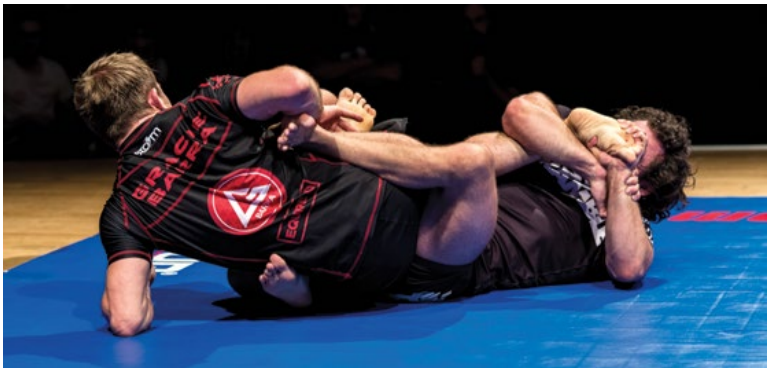
EDDIE CUMMINGS VS REILLY BODYCOMB

CUMMINGS WINS VIA HEEL HOOK



The second of the nogi match-ups featured two guys renowned for their leg lock attacks. Eddie Cummings, hot off his win at the recent EBI tournament, faced off against Sambo fighter, Reilly Bodycomb.

The fight began with Cummings pulling open guard, before spinning under and immediately latching onto one of Bodycomb's legs. There was no hiding his intentions for this fight! Bodycomb managed to kick out the next few attempts that Cummings made at attacking his leg, but he was so relentless that eventually Bodycomb conceded that he had to engage and couldn't avoid the inevitable leg lock battle. They spent a few moments breaking each other's grips and trying to prevent each other from isolating a leg, but it wasn't long before Cummings had latched onto a heel hook that Bodycomb couldn't kick out from. Cummings won by heel-hook.



DANIEL STRAUSS VS AJ AGAZARM

STRAUSS AND AGAZARM FIGHT TO A DRAW

Dan Strauss, by far the crowd favourite, was out for revenge after AJ defeated his training partner and good friend, Oli Geddes, at Polaris 1. Neither had made any attempt of hiding their dislike for one another in the build up to Polaris 2, with both of them winding each other up on social media prior to this match-up.

Once they had both stepped on the mat, Strauss approached Agazarm and a stare-down commenced. The referee had to make several requests for them to take a step back and begin the fight, but neither wanted to be the first to turn away. The atmosphere was intense and the crowd was lapping up this rivalry before this highly anticipated match up had even begun!

Agazarm is renowned for his wrestling, but Strauss was happy to stand with him. Pushing and shoving Agazarm around, trying to show dominance over the smaller but more decorated competitor, Strauss sat to open guard where he baited and mocked AJ to engage. This prompted Agazarm to pull off a beautiful cartwheel pass, but Strauss immediately regained his guard whilst the crowd erupted from such an explosive start.

Agazarm attempted to pass from knees, but didn't manage to advance his position and both competitors stood back up again. Strauss, being the showman he is, hyped up the crowd by continually taunting his opponent and disrespecting his stand up. Agazarm launched himself at Strauss and pulled off a perfect double leg takedown, but the next few moments involved high paced scrambling which included Strauss gripping up and rolling around to try and finish a guillotine, before being double legged again by Agazarm from the knees, and finally slapping on a triangle/armbar which AJ slipped out from. The crowd erupted throughout the whole sequence and applauded the two athletes' efforts for such a technical exchange.

Strauss attempted another guillotine before being brought back into the middle of the mat. He pulled open guard and continued to mock Agazarm, saying 'You've got nothing!' before standing back up and beating his chest to try and elicit a response. Strauss pulled guard once again and Agazarm responded with another fast cartwheel pass, which brought the fight to a momentary pause whilst Strauss cleaned up a bloody nose.

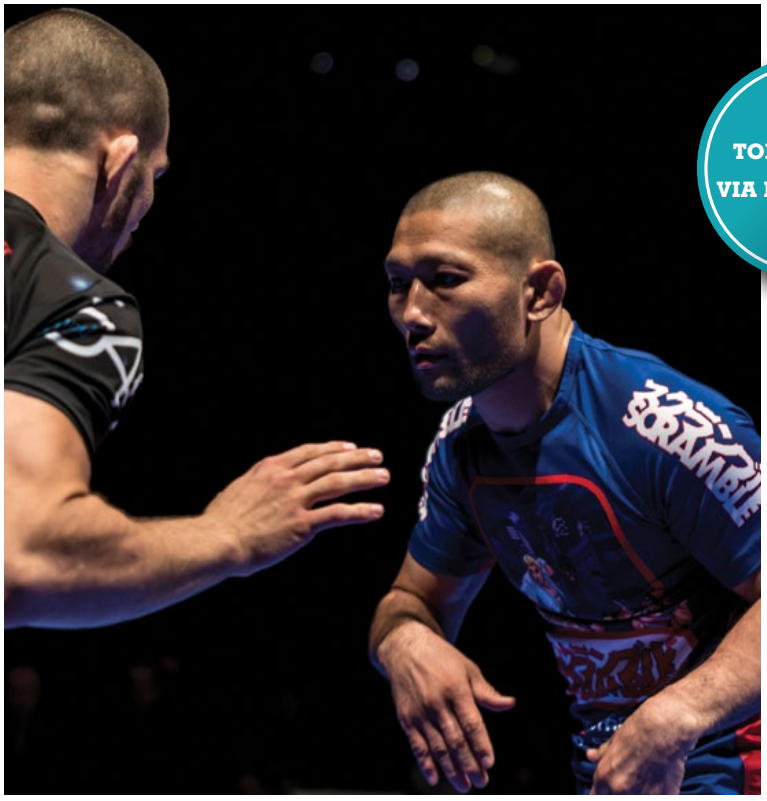
From standing, Agazarm attempted a single leg which Strauss locked up a kimura grip on. They fell to the ground and Strauss span round to Agazarm's back and secured one hook. The crowd went absolutely mental as they could sense a chance for Strauss to finish the fight. Agazarm escaped and both came back to their feet. Now it was AJ's turn to mock, by sticking his head out for Strauss to guillotine, showing no respect for his previous attempts. Strauss grabbed on to Agazarm's head and a mad scramble ensued before time was called. Both shared a massive hug and raised each other's arms at the end of the match, knowing that they had made jiu jitsu history by putting on such an epic performance.

MICHELLE NICOLINI VS GEZARY MATUDA

After putting on a fantastic performance against Angelica Galvao in Polaris 1, Michelle Nicolini was one of three athletes (Tonon and AJ being the other two) invited back to Polaris for a second time. She faced off against Gezary Matuda, who has had an incredible few years tearing up the competition scene.

MATUDA WINS VIA ARMBAR

The fans were eager for another immensely technical battle between two ladies, but were instead given a super slick submission finish that you'd most definitely have missed if you blinked too soon! Nicolini sat to guard whilst holding onto Matuda's lapel. As soon as Nicolini had hit the ground, Matuda leapt over her, and pulled off an armbar not unlike Davi Ramos' at the recent ADCC. It forced Nicolini to tap almost immediately, which was greeted with immense cheering from the crowd.



GARRY TONON VS MASAKAZU IMANARI

TONON WINS VIA HEEL HOOK

If the previous fights weren't exhausting enough, it was now time for the main event. Garry Tonon has had a phenomenal year and is considered one of the most successful grapplers of recent years, and near on impossible to submit. So it was only fitting to pair him up against a grappler who has never been submitted and has a soft spot for nasty leg locks.

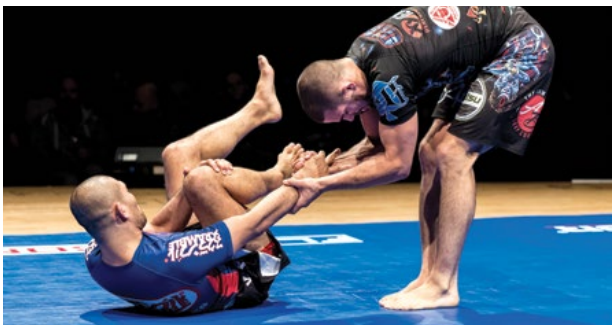
From standing, Tonon attempted a nice ankle pick but it was shaken off by Imanari. On his second attempt he managed to switch from the ankle pick to an open guard pull and headed straight for the feet of Imanari. Both now found themselves in each other's open guard, frantically looking to attack the feet. Tonon latched onto a deep same-side heel hook and cranked it hard, which, when it became clear that Imanari had no intention of tapping, produced gasps of horror from the crowd. Imanari managed to free his leg in the space created when Tonon moved to belly down on the foot.

Both sat to each other's guard and continued looking to attack the legs. In the battle for legs, Tonon managed to secure another heel hook, but this time much deeper and tighter. Imanari tried to roll to escape but Tonon quickly followed him. The crowd let out another much louder gasp as the fighters were centre stage and the torque being applied to Imanari's knee was exposed for all to see. Imanari tapped to a very respectful and humble Tonon who helped him to his feet.

On paper, some had suggested that this card would not be as exciting as Polaris 1. Upon leaving St David's Hall, and reading what people have said on numerous social media outlets after the event, the consensus is that not only was Polaris 2 better than Polaris 1, but that Polaris 2 was one of the most exciting grappling events ever staged.

The guys at Polaris have totally outdone themselves, yet again. Witnessing first-hand the professionalism and organisation of all the guys backstage, it is evident that the effort that goes into producing these events is absolutely phenomenal. Polaris has established a position at the forefront of the best professional submission only grappling events, and it is imperative that the BJJ community supports these events through purchasing tickets and pay per views for the live streams.

Thanks to the guys at Polaris, Scramble, Tatami and Flo Grappling for an incredible event. We await Polaris 3 with bated breath!



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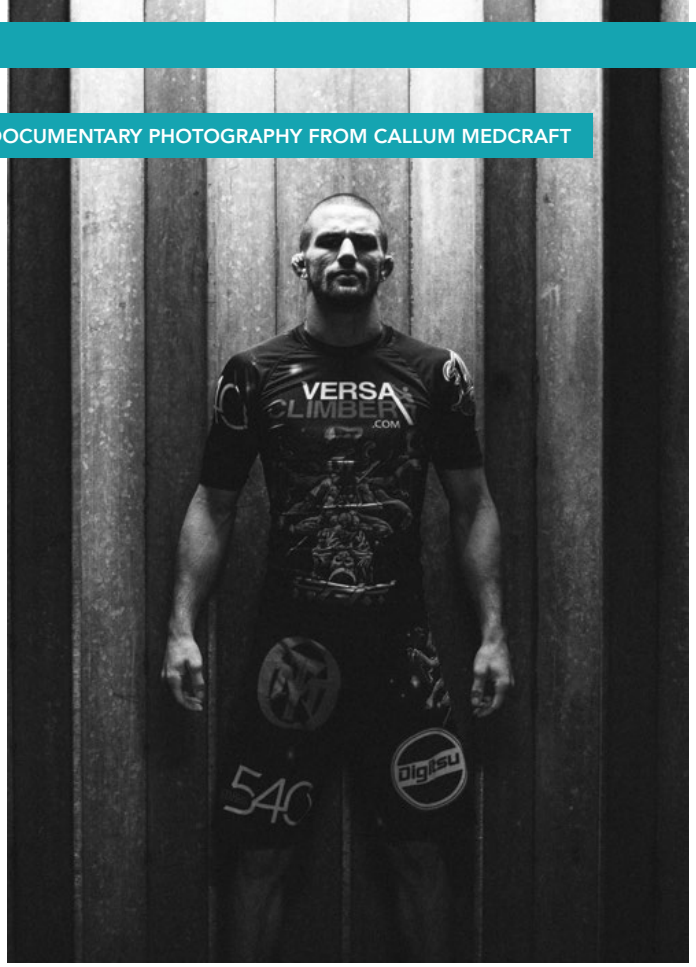

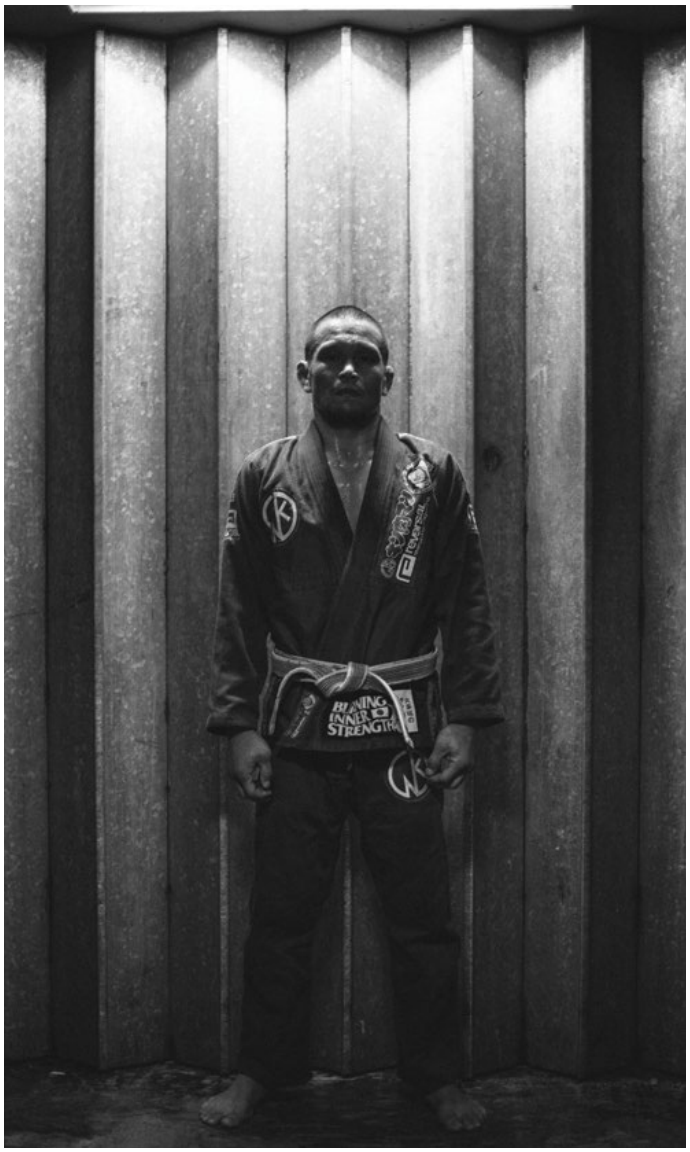

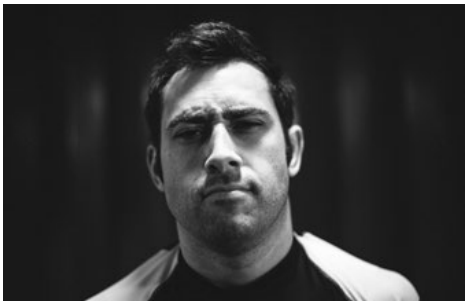

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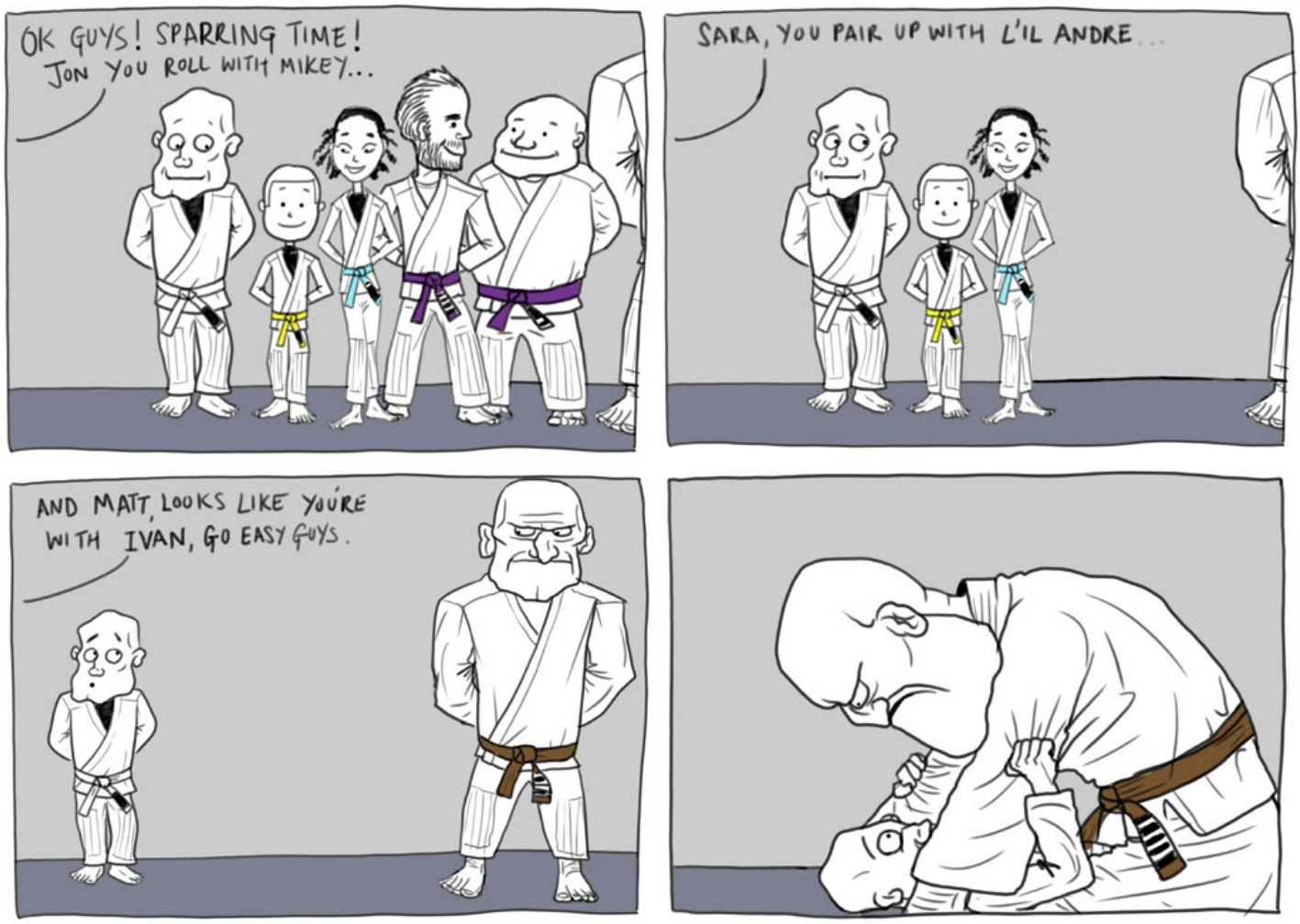
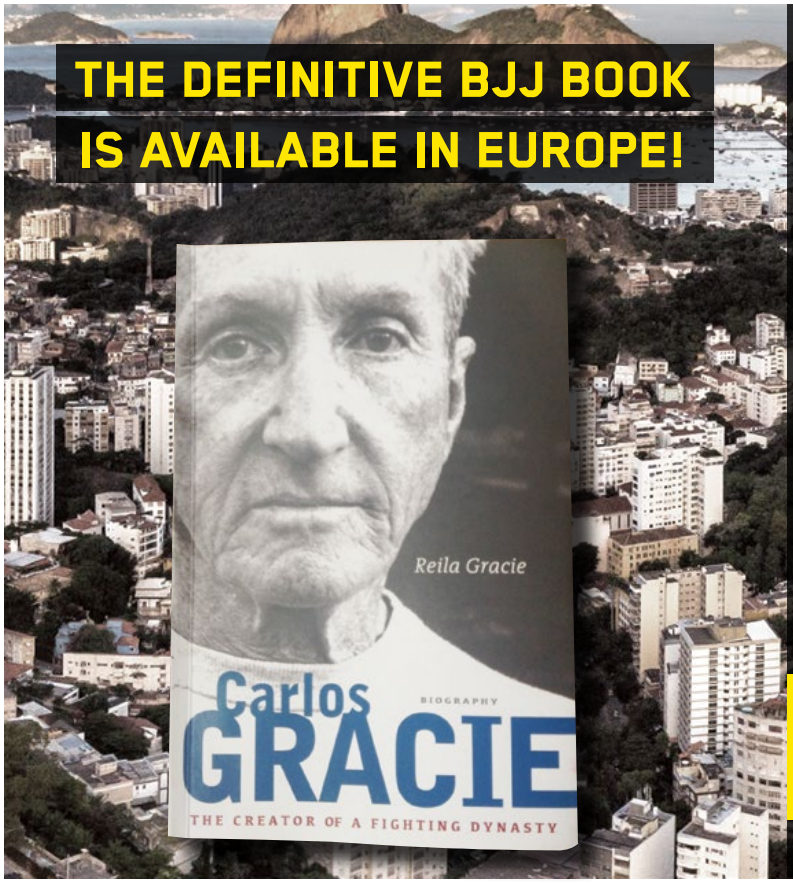

OK GUYS! SPARRING TIME! JON YOU ROLL WITH MIKEY...
SARA, YOU PAIR UP WITH L'IL ANDRE...
AND MATT, LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE WITH IVAN, GO EASY GUYS.



CARLOS GRACIE: THE CREATOR OF A FIGHTING DYNASTY

Reila Gracie's renowned biography of Carlos Gracie Snr. has now been translated into English and we are thrilled to offer up this limited edition classic in the UK.

At well over 500 pages, this huge undertaking took Reila more than 10 years to research and put together. There are many fascinating previously unpublished photos of Carlos, his siblings, and many of their children as well.

"Reila Gracie tells her father's story, including his first martial arts lessons, the fights he got himself into, the family rifts and dramas, details of the main fights and how he created the style known as Brazilian jiu-jitsu." *Isto E Gente Magazine* (Brazil)

"Carlos Gracie's daughter and Helio's niece, Reila, has written the most controversial book about the dynasty of fighters and, even more, has turned the spotlight on to the women in the most famous family of tough guys in Brazil." *O Globo Magazine* (Brazil)

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